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*The Inanity and Mischief of
Vulgar Superstitions.*

FOUR SERMONS,

PREACHED AT

ALL-SAINT'S CHURCH, HUNTINGDON,

On the 25th Day of March, in the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795.

BY M. J. NAYLOR, M.A. K

FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND LECTURER
AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD, YORKSHIRE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, SOME ACCOUNT OF THE
WITCHES OF WARBOYS.

*Superstitio fusa per gentes, oppressit omnium fere animos,
atque hominum imbecillitatem occupavit—Multum et nobis met-
ipsis et nostris profuturi videbamur, si eam funditus sustulissemus.*

CIC. DE DIVIN. l. 2. c. 72.

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BORN ; AND E. GREENWOOD, LEEDS.

M DCC XC V.



TO THE
MAYOR, CORPORATION,
AND
INHABITANTS
OF THE
TOWN OF *HUNTINGDON*,

THESE
S E R M O N S

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,

M. J. NAYLOR.

TO THE
MAYOR, CORPORATION,
AND
INHABITANTS
OF THE



TOWN OF LONDON,

SERMONS

AND LECTURES DELIVERED

BY THEIR HONORABLE SERVANTS

JOHN AYLOR

P R E F A C E.

CUSTOM appears to have laid a sort of embargo upon every publication, however small and insignificant, unless ushered into the world by something in form of a preface. How then shall sermons, and those too upon the antiquated subject of Witchcraft, presume to obtrude themselves upon the public without such a precursor and apologist, to tell the cause of their appearance, and deprecate the frowns of austere criticism? Of such a bold infringement of laudable custom, I will not venture

venture to be guilty. Yet, upon the hackneyed plea of the earnest solicitation of friends I will not rest, however justly such a plea might be advanced, but rather acknowledge myself actuated by a faint hope, that even this feeble effort, levelled against the gloomy gothic mansion of superstition, may not be entirely without a beneficial effect. Surely the small mite of the poor in knowledge, cast into the treasury of truth, is entitled to some regard, especially as it may excite the extensively wise and learned to contribute more freely from their ample stores. And should the following sheets be fortunate enough to call up one combatant against the odious and mischievous powers of bigotry and ignorance, my insignificant labors

bors will be sufficiently recompensed.

I am aware that by many, Witchcraft, the principal object of the subsequent discussions, will be despised and ridiculed as exploded legendary nonsense, unworthy even of being ranked with those *pretty* stories which divert the nursery, and amuse the infant mind. Perhaps a more extensive acquaintance with the prejudices and superstitions of the lower orders of the community, might induce them to look upon it as not entirely undeserving of some serious regard. Does it not shock humanity to see the poor, helpless, infirm and old, persecuted with rancorous hatred, for a fancied association with the infernal powers? Such sufferers

sufferers claim our protection and support; such destructive, uncharitable notions call for every effort to correct and eradicate them. Many, who have moved only in a superior sphere, and whose minds have been cultivated by a more refined education, must undoubtedly deem it almost impossible for rational beings to believe and defend such absurdities. Yet strange as it may appear to those, lamentable experience but too clearly proves, how extremely deep these notions are still engraven upon the minds of thousands, notwithstanding the great advances in learning and knowledge, which have been made within the two last centuries. The belief of these extravagancies was indeed gradually yielding to the powerful progress of science,

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wisely

wisely deviated from the example of their highly-esteemed predecessor, and forbore to disgrace their Magazine, by the insertion of such abominable trash.

But I shall forbear to trespass further upon the reader's patience, and waving general apologies, proceed to mention the peculiar circumstances which gave rise to the following Sermons. After the conviction and execution of the three unfortunate *Samuels*, for the diabolical crime of witchcraft,* their goods, which amounted in value to 40l. were forfeited to Sir *Henry Cromwell*, as lord of the manor of *Warboys*. Averse to taking possession of

* For a further account of their *devilish* deeds see the subjoined narrative.

the property of *such* felons, he gave all to the corporation of *Huntingdon*, on condition, that they should give 40s. every year to a Doctor or Bachelor in Divinity, of Queen's College, *Cambridge*, to preach a Sermon at All-Saint's church in *Huntingdon*, on the annunciation of the blessed Virgin, against the sin of witchcraft, and to teach the people how they should discover and frustrate the machinations of witches and dealers with evil spirits.

The reverend and learned author of the Memoirs of the protectoral house of Cromwell, having mentioned this curious and ancient institution, adds the following uncandid reflection : * “ It is with real con-

* Vol. I. p. 25, second edition.

“ cern that I acquaint the reader,
 “ that there is still an annual Ser-
 “ mon preached against witchcraft in
 “ *Huntingdon*, by a divine sent from
 “ Queen’s College, Cambridge. It
 “ would be highly commendable in
 “ the Corporation of Huntingdon,
 “ and Queen’s College in Cambridge,
 “ to agree, that if a Sermon must
 “ be preached, the subject of it
 “ should, instead of being levelled
 “ against the pretended sin of witch-
 “ craft, be an address to the people,
 “ cautioning them against falling
 “ into such errors and prejudices, as
 “ made their forefathers involve the
 “ unhappy and immeasurably injur-
 “ ed Samuels in ruin and destruc-
 “ tion.” Had this laborious gentle-
 man prosecuted his inquiries on this
 subject, with that diligence and ac-
 curacy,

curacy, which is the indispensable duty of a rigid narrator of facts, he would have found, that the Society of Queen's were not such slaves of superstition as he ungenerously insinuates. The sin of witchcraft has long ceased to be the theme of their annual discourses, nor has the subject ever been mentioned, except to explode, and deprecate the lamentable effects of, such miserable delusions.

How far the following "addresses to the people" of Huntingdon are entitled to the approbation of the above-mentioned author, or how far they merit the regard of the public, is not for me to determine. Had I formed the least design of prosecuting the subject so extensively, or of presenting

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presenting my imperfect labors to the public, when first delegated by the Society of Queen's to deliver this annual Lecture, it would have been almost unpardonable not to have arranged the whole more methodically, and to have avoided the apparent repetitions which have necessarily arisen from the want of a previous plan. For these, and other imperfections, I hope, the indulgent reader will make every allowance, which candour and good nature can suggest. I dare not be so presumptuous as to lay claim to any originalities. To Dr. WATERLAND, Mr. FARMER, Mr. SHUCKFORD, and various other learned authors, I must acknowledge my obligation for almost every material observation these pages contain. If I have succeeded
in

in making a compilation which deserves not the severe lash of the angry critic, I am satisfied. And as my hearers were kind enough to express their approbation of these Sermons, when delivered from the pulpit, to their countenance and protection, I now again beg leave to recommend them, when issuing from the press.

SERMON

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SERMON

SERMON I.

1 SAM. xxviii. 8.

*And he said, I pray thee Divine unto me by
the familiar Spirit, and bring me him up
whom I shall name unto thee.*

WHETHER superstition or infidelity is the greater enemy to true religion and human happiness, has been a subject of dispute with the Philosopher and the Divine. That both are pregnant with most pernicious effects, has always been readily acknowledged by the humane and candid observer. A serious and strenuous endeavour to eradicate either

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from the minds of men must therefore be a task worthy of every one, who has engaged in the important office of instructing his brethren. When we add hereto a recollection of that memorable and melancholy event, which has given origin to my addressing you this day, surely no apology will be thought necessary for presenting you with a few observations upon the curious portion of sacred history, from which the Text is taken. For mysterious and unimportant as this relation may at first view appear, nevertheless, if candidly examined, it is capable of affording us much useful and apposite instruction.

Saul, after having been raised by God to the Throne of Israel, had refused to obey his voice, and faithfully to execute his commands. Provoked by this disobedience, the Lord withdrew his favor and protection from him; and now in the decline of life, when surrounded by his enemies, and distrusting his own subjects, he found himself abandoned by his God, whom *he* had before presumptuously forsaken.

faken. Roused by his present fears, rather than actuated by any real penitence for his former misconduct, he wished to obtain some instruction and direction from above, in an exigency so urgent and alarming. By all the various methods he could devise, did he attempt to procure an answer; but "neither by Dreams, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets,"* would Jehovah vouchsafe to impart the least comfort or instruction. Finding himself thus rejected and abandoned, Saul, distracted by the violence of his distress, was determined to take a step at once impious and absurd. Afflicted indeed but not humbled, sorrowful yet blind to his own wickedness, and deaf to the voice of reason, he was weak enough to indulge a strange hope, that the Ghost of the dead Prophet Samuel might be prevailed upon to listen to him, though God had deserted him. Hurried on by despair and superstitious credulity, he hastily repaired to a woman of Endor, famous for her skill in Divination and Necromancy, by whose assistance

* Verse 6.

he madly expected to call Samuel from the dead,*

Various opinions have been advanced by Commentators respecting this transaction, you will therefore readily pardon an attempt, to illustrate and establish that, which appears to me the most rational and just.

* Then Saul said unto his servants " seek me a woman that hath a *familiar spirit*, &c." 1 Sam. xxviii. the word *OB*, which as well as its plural *OBOTH*, is always rendered by our Translators *familiar Spirit*, literally signifies a *Bottle*, (which amongst the Ancients was formed of Leather, and somewhat resembled a Bladder) and was metaphorically applied to those Persons, whose Bellies, when they delivered their Oracles, were distended, like a Bottle. The LXX generally translate these words *εγγαστριμυθας*, *Ventriloquists*; and Isaiah xix. 3. *τας εκ της γης φωνεσσας*, *those that speak from the Earth*. This extraordinary art, or rather perhaps gift of Nature, as experience has discovered, requires not the interference of any evil Spirit. But to speak without moving the Lips, in a voice which seemed to proceed from the Belly, or from some distant quarter, might easily impose upon the ignorant and superstitious, and make them readily believe, that these responses were really uttered by *that Spirit of Divination or Apollo* (*πνευμα πυθωνος* Acts XVI, 16, 18,) to which they were ascribed by designing Pretenders. Such an impostor we may conclude the woman to be, whom Saul consulted.

Some

Some have thought, that the whole was nothing but a mere trick, by which the artful woman imposed upon Saul's credulity, making him believe that she really saw Samuel, when nothing appeared, and contriving a voice to proceed from some secret corner, and hold with him the conversation related by the sacred historian. But this opinion wears such an air of improbability as renders our assent to it rather difficult. For though there can be no reason to doubt but that the *good* woman's intentions when she undertook the business, were to impose upon Saul by a feigned answer; yet had all been left solely to her management, it is highly probable that she would have delivered her Oracle in terms more agreeable to Saul's wishes. This was the general practice of Oracle-mongers, which she would have been induced to imitate, both by the fear of offending the King, and endangering her own life, and also by the desire of procuring a more ample reward. But the whole Tenor of Samuel's speech is much too ungrateful and solemn, much too true
and

and prophetic to have entirely originated in her invention. How was she able (had she been bold enough) decisively to declare to him, that the army of Israel should be delivered into the hands of the Philistines, and that he and his sons should fall in the field? To know, and to be able, to predict with certainty, events yet shut up in the womb of time, is claimed by God as his exclusive privilege. He challenges the fictitious Gods of the idolatrous nations, to give this clear proof of their Divinity; "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob; let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen; let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come; shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods."*

But is it not highly absurd to imagine, that the Deity would communicate any portion of this knowledge to a detestable

* Isaiah xli. 21, 22, 23.

forcerefs,

forcerers, would give her the honour of revealing his counsels, and concur with her in a vile imposition upon the credulous Saul.*

As there appears, therefore no foundation for the opinion, that all was a mere contrivance of the artful woman, to impose upon the senses of her royal confilter; must we not conclude, that there certainly was an apparition, which conversed with Saul?

But the reasons already advanced against its being only a cunningly contrived imposture, must equally serve to convince us, that it could not be any familiar or evil spirit, conjured up by the infernal power of her forceries, to personate the dead prophet. For this agent, as well as his

* Should any one however be still inclined, with Dr. Chandler, (Life of David, B. 2. Ch. 16) and other learned men, to consider the whole transaction as nothing but an artifice of the cunning Pythoness, yet he must readily agree with me in the principal conclusion I wish to establish, that this History gives no sanction whatever to the popular notions concerning the powers of witches.

precious mistress, must have been disposed to give an answer more agreeable to the inclinations and wishes of the distressed king ; and both of them must have been equally ignorant of futurity. Prescience, it has been already observed, is the attribute of God alone, and cannot be possessed by any one, but to whom, and in what degree, he is pleased to impart it. And can we suppose, that he would ever be so bountiful to beings continually engaged in labouring to counteract the designs of his providence ?

But since it was neither a secret voice contrived by the cunning deceiver, nor an evil spirit conjured up by her magic art, which pronounced the dread denunciation against the trembling king, it must have been Samuel himself, who revisited the earth to be the messenger of these unwelcome tidings. Was he then called from his rest by the irresistible power of her incantations ? Surely nothing can be more injurious to the perfections of the Almighty, than to suppose he would permit

mit impious men, nay all the combined powers of darkness, to interrupt, even in the smallest degree, the peaceful rest of his departed servants. Nothing can be more incongruous with reason than to imagine, that ceremonies however devised, or words however constructed and combined, can have any power to reanimate the mouldering dust, and recal it from the silent mansions of the grave.* As soon may we expect to see spacious cities erected, noble forests called forth, and lofty mountains removed, by the potent sound of cabalistic words. It must therefore be by God's appointment that the departed prophet appeared. He was sent to bring this severe and unwelcome message to Saul, as a rebuke for his presumption, and a punishment for adding to his other sins this flagrant transgression of God's express command.† Nor is such a supposition repugnant to the divine proceedings in similar circumstances. When the prophet Balaam practised inchant-

* See Farmer on Miracles, chap. iii. sect. 3.

† Levit. xix. 26 and 31. And xx. 6.

ments, to obtain a favourable answer for the Moabites, and a malediction against the children of Israel, God continually over-ruled him, constraining him to pronounce blessings instead of curses.* When king Ahaziah sent to consult Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover from his sickness, the Lord sent Elijah to intercept his messengers, to reprove the king, and announce the unwelcome news of his certain death.† And such was his interposition in the case of Saul. Saul came in hopes of obtaining some grateful information from Samuel, which he probably would have received from the designing pretender to extraordinary powers, if God had not disappointed both him and her, by sending the real Samuel to pronounce his awful fiat. Confounded by the unexpected severity of this sentence, the king fell down in a swoon, unable longer to sustain the bitter agonies of his mind.

* Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

† 2 Kings i.

That

That the woman herself was greatly disappointed and deceived is clearly manifest from her behaviour, as soon as the apparition presented itself. Conscious of her own inability to call Samuel from the dead, or to conjure up such an appearance, no sooner did she see him, than she cried out with vehemence.* Struck with such an astonishing evidence of the divine interposition, she immediately concluded, that the king alone could be the person who applied to her, and she exclaimed with terror, "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" †

The supposition that it was Samuel himself who appeared, is also plain and natural, and consonant to the style and

* The cause to which the Jewish Rabbins ascribe her fright is too singular and extravagant not to be mentioned: Because, say they, he did not appear in the usual posture of ghosts which are conjured up, with his head downwards and feet upwards, but erect as men stand when living. (Pool's Synop. in locum.)

Josephus attributes it to his venerable and majestic appearance; *θεασάμενον ἄνδρα σεμνόν καὶ θεοπρεπῆ ταρατίζεται.* (Lib. 6. ch. 14.)

† Verse 12.

B 2

tenor

tenor of the whole narration. Had it only been a personated Samuel, or only a familiar assuming Samuel's shape and deportment, is it not probable, that the sacred historian would have given us some intimation of it, and not have delivered the whole story precisely in the same terms, as if the real Samuel had himself appeared? * The learned author of the book of Ecclesiasticus was clearly of this opinion. For he says, " After his death
 " he prophesied, and shewed the king his
 " end, and lifted up his voice from the
 " earth in prophecy, to blot out the
 " wickedness of the people." †

To mention half the great authorities
 antient and modern, which might be

* The language of the narration is: " And the woman saw
 " Samuel." (ver. 12.) " Samuel said to Saul." (ver. 15.)
 " Then said Samuel." ver. 16, &c.) " And Saul perceived
 " that it was Samuel *himself*." (ver. 14.) The English trans-
 lators, warped by their own preconceived notions, have omit-
 ted the word *himself*, which seems peculiarly directed against
 the vulgar superstition of the power of witches over ghosts
 and spectres. (Farmer on Miracles, ch. 4. sect. 2. p. 490.)

† Ch. xlv. 20.

quoted

quoted in support of this opinion, would be trespassing too much upon your time and patience, but we must not pass over in silence the more weighty objections advanced against it.

When Saul asked the woman, "what sawest thou?"* She answered,—“I saw Gods *ascending* out out of the earth.”† Now, say some objectors, the righteous Samuel must have been in a better place than the bowels of the earth, and consequently have rather been discovered *descending*. This objection, founded entirely upon the vulgar notions concerning the situation of the places of future rewards

* Ver. 13.

† Or a God, viz, a person bearing the habit and dignity of a Magistrate. ‘ That the word Elohim is applied to Judges and
‘ Magistrates cannot be denied, See Exod. xxii. 8, 9, 28,
‘ Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6. Le Clerc and Patrick on 1 Sam. xxviii. 13.
‘ Dr. Chandler (in his life of David, p. 239) objects to the ap-
‘ plication of this plural Term to a single person; yet this
‘ Term is applied to Moses, Exod. vii. 1. And it is certain
‘ that Saul did not understand the witch as speaking of more
‘ than one person, for he asks, “ what is his form ? ” And she
‘ explains her own meaning in the answer she returns to this
‘ question:—“ An old man ariseth.” (Farmer on Mir. Ch. 4.
Sect. 2. p. 489. Note z.)

and

and punishments, is too unimportant to demand much of our attention. For can it be of any great consequence from what quarter Samuel appeared to make his approach? Besides, so sudden and unexpected was this visit, that the woman in her violent alarm might easily be mistaken.*

Again it is objected, the apparition complains to Saul of being *disquieted* by him;† but had it been Samuel no incantations could have effected this, and if God had sent him, he would not have complained. Though Samuel could not be justly dis-

* “It does not appear that any magic rites were used, or that a moments time intervened between Saul’s request, and Samuel’s appearance. The English translators have inserted the Particle *when*, (“And when the woman saw Samuel”) without any authority from the original, and merely to favor their own Prejudices.” (Farmer on Mir. Ch. 4. Sect. 2, p. 487. Note s.) The passage should therefore be read: (V. 11, 12.) *Saul said, bring me up Samuel. And the woman saw Samuel and cried with a loud voice.*

† V. 15. The judicious and learned Farmer (on Mir. Ch. 4. Sect. 2. p. 492) translates this passage, “why hast thou provoked me to rise up.” Thus ascribing his rising up, not to the Pythoness or her magic art, nor strictly and properly to Saul, but rather to the Prophet’s indignation against the King.

pleased

pleased at being sent to execute the divine commands, yet as Saul's madness and presumption were the cause of his being called from his peaceful abode, did they not deserve severe reprehension? And where was the impropriety of reproving Saul, who, though he could not compel Samuel's appearance, was undoubtedly the sole occasion of it?

But, say our opponents, what reason can be given, why God, who had refused to answer Saul by his more usual methods, should at last declare his will to him by such singular and unusual means?—Many of the dispensations of Divine Providence are enveloped in an obscurity, which our circumscribed faculties cannot penetrate. That we are unable to give a satisfactory reason for any extraordinary interposition of the Deity, can therefore be no valid argument against the fact, if well established. In this instance however, the divine conduct may be accounted for. The Lord refused to answer Saul, that being thus deserted, he might be awakened to a consciousness

sciousness of his crimes, and led to repentance. But when instead of rationally obeying this admonition, he presumptuously broke the law of his God, and applied to the pretended consulter of familiar spirits, the Lord embraced this opportunity of expressing his just resentment, and denouncing that vengeance, which though delayed, had not been forgotten. For by this action, Saul had now filled up the measure of his guilt, as the Author of the book of Chronicles clearly intimates.* “So Saul died for his transgressions, “which he committed against the Lord, “even against the word of the Lord, “which he kept not; and also for asking “counsel of one that had a familiar spirit to enquire of it.”†

Another most material objection is advanced, which indeed would be decisive,

* 1 Chron. x. 13.

† In the Translation of the lxx. we find a remarkable addition to this Verse; καὶ ἀπεκρίνατο αὐτῷ Σαμουὴλ ὁ προφήτης. And Samuel the Prophet answered him.” May not this be justly considered as contributing to the support of our Hypothesis?

if

if once established; that the predictions of this apparition were not true, and consequently could not have been delivered by God's messenger, Samuel. For though it must be acknowledged, that the things foretold did come to pass in every particular, yet the language of the prediction was, "*to-morrow*, shalt thou and thy sons be with me," though some days might probably elapse afterwards before the battle in Gilboa—As the learned in general agree,* that the word here translated, *to-morrow*, frequently signifies, *very shortly*, or hereafter, this difficulty is soon removed.†

* Universal History Vol. 4. p. 57. (Note P.)

† This interpretation of the word may be thought to render the whole prophecy so vague and indeterminate, as to give it too much the air of an imposture; nor does there appear any necessity for having recourse to it, if we carefully attend to the circumstances of the History. Saul came to this female diviner by night, and having conversed with Samuel, and taken some refreshment, went away from Endor the same night. Gilboa was not so far distant, as to render it impracticable for him to reach the Camp on the succeeding day. The Jews in their computation of time reckoned the day from sunset to sunset, consequently the morrow or next day would not commence till after the sunsetting, which succeeded Saul's being at Endor. What therefore should prevent us from concluding, that the prediction, as it stands in the common translation, was literally fulfilled?

But another immediately presents itself: Is it not said, "thou and thy sons shall be *with me*?" Was then the wicked Saul to be classed after death with the righteous Samuel?—Supposing the condition of a future state to be at all alluded to here, might we not with equal propriety ask; was no distinction to be made betwixt the upright, pious Jonathan, and his unjust, ungodly father? This expression therefore, *thou and thy sons shall be with me*, probably signifies nothing more than this, *thou and thy sons shall like me be numbered among the dead.**

I have now examined and endeavoured to explain this remarkable story, which has so often been appealed to as incontrovertible scripture authority for the vulgar notions of conjuration and witchcraft. And, I presume, we are warranted in concluding, from the arguments advanced; that it does not give the least

* By the lxx. this sentence is translated, "*καὶ ἀντίστοιχόν σου καὶ οἱ υἱοί σου μετὰ σοῦ πεσόντες.*" And to-morrow thou and thy sons "with thee shall be slain."

support or countenance to such absurd superstitions. One great obstacle is thus removed, which has prevented many from believing, that these notions could be delusive. So far the strong evidence is weakened, which has induced many to do violence to their reason, rather than disbelieve what they imagined was supported by unerring revelation. Some other passages of scripture, which at first view appear to sanction these absurdities, would I am persuaded, be found, upon a candid examination, inimical to them. Several arguments from reason might also be advanced to prove such notions utterly void of any real foundation. Though these I am at present obliged to omit, yet a future day may perhaps afford me an opportunity of considering them. And if at last such opinions should appear unable to bear the test of fair and free inquiry, with what sorrow must we look back upon the fate of those miserable wretches, who have fallen the lamentable victims of such sad delusion?

Profiting however by the example of Saul, let us endeavour to draw an useful lesson from this singular part of his history. Let it teach us, how impossible it is to lay any scheme of happiness, unless favoured and sanctioned by God; how dreadful to have so far provoked his indignation by our iniquities, as to be forsaken by him in our distress: how tremendous to have him our enemy, when the awful hour of dissolution approaches! Let it also teach us, how desirable it is to enjoy his friendship and affection: how inestimable a blessing to have him for our guide and protector, when dangers and difficulties assail us! For, "if the Lord is on our side, then need we not fear what man can do unto us;" securely shielded by his Almighty wings, we may walk even through the valley of the shadow of death without trepidation! Conscious however that nothing but a pious and holy life can ever procure for us this pearl of inestimable price, let us make religion our first and principal care, as it is our greatest and most important concern. Impressed with

a due sense of the high value of this object, let us instantly "give diligence to make " our calling and election sure." And may that being, who is all goodness and love, assist and prosper our humble and sincere endeavours, so that overcoming every difficulty, and triumphing over every opposition, we may finally obtain a glorious and everlasting inheritance with the saints in light.

SERMON

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SERMON

by the pure light of the Gospel, which

SERMON II.

I TIMOTHY iv. 7.

Refuse prophane and old Wives Fables.

A Strong predilection for the marvellous and extravagant has always formed a distinguished and striking feature in every rude, uncultivated mind. Nor in any age has there been wanting knavery, ever ready and eager to take advantage of credulity and ignorance. Hence have many idle and absurd superstitions derived their origin, and been most industriously propagated amongst the ancient heathen, during that long period of ignorance and idolatry, which enveloped and obumbrated the major part of mankind. Much of this darkness has been already dissipated
by

by the pure light of the gospel, which ~~has received no trifling and inconsiderable~~ assistance from that spirit of rational philosophy, so eminently displayed in these later ages. But almost inconceivable is the difficulty of eradicating a deep-rooted superstition from the human mind, even though its fallacy and absurdity be portrayed in the strongest colours; especially if the error has received the sanction of remote and *venerable* antiquity. Yet the difficulty of the work should stimulate us to redouble our exertions, and not sink us in despair; we should not be discouraged from sowing the seed with care and diligence, though the prospect of reaping the desired harvest be distant and uncertain. Is not every effort to rescue mankind from this dreary bondage, how weak and circumscribed soever it be, justly entitled to the countenance and support of the candid and benevolent? Desirous of contributing, even the feeblest assistance, towards the advancement of so desirable an event, I have endeavoured, on a former occasion, to shew the inanity of the grand argument,

ment, usually drawn from the history of the Witch of Endor, in support of the vulgar notions of magic and witchcraft. My present intention is to make a few observations upon some other portions of scripture, which *may* be advanced in defence of these absurdities, in order still farther to expose the "baseless fabric" of such superstitions.

The opposition made to Moses and Aaron by the magicians of Egypt, constitutes one of the most singular occurrences recorded in the pages of sacred history. For some of the first miracles, which the advocates of the chosen race performed, to prove themselves the delegates of the Almighty, were immediately, imitated by these servants of Pharaoh. Yet we find them afterwards obliged to desist from the contest, and acknowledge themselves unable to execute others, apparently not more wonderful.

And were miracles really performed in
opposition to the Sovereign of the Uni-
D verse?

verse? Let us carefully examine the principal circumstances, which accompanied those extraordinary transactions, and from thence endeavour to obtain a satisfactory answer to this important question.

God beheld his peculiar people, the seed of Jacob, groaning under the severe yoke which the Egyptians had laid upon them, and resolved to deliver them. For this purpose he sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh; to request that he would let the Israelites go three days journey into the wilderness, to sacrifice unto the Lord their God. Satisfied with his own idolatrous religion, the king saw no necessity for such a sacrifice, and suspecting it to be only a pretext for getting out of his dominions, he ordered their labour to be increased, that they might have no leisure for forming such dangerous projects. And when, by their officers, they represented their grievances to Pharaoh, instead of meeting with redress, they were insultingly reproved for their idleness and disaffection. Groaning beneath such oppression,

sion, they directed their complaints against Moses and Aaron, as the cause of their augmented burdens. In this dilemma Moses applied to God, who again sent him and his brother to Pharaoh, to repeat their demand in his name. The king now required of them a miracle, as a proof that they were indeed the delegates of God, and not mere pretending impostors. To satisfy him Aaron cast his rod before him upon the ground, which was instantly transformed into a serpent. Immediately Pharaoh called together the wise-men and forcerers of his court,* to try if

* The magi of antiquity were originally the priests of the gods, and the professors of science. They undertook to interpret dreams and prodigies, to foretel future events, and to perform many extraordinary things by the rules of their art, and their deep knowledge of the secret powers, and virtues of nature. Their art was built upon the general system of Pagan theology, which deified all the powers of nature, and they pretended, by the use of proper charms and ceremonies, to be able to render the gods propitious to their desires. They were frequently applied to by kings, particularly those of Egypt and Babylon, where they flourished most, and consequently possessed considerable weight in the state. To preserve this influence, they were necessarily always ready to supply by artifice, whatever they wanted in ability.

Cicero de Divin. Lib. 1. Idem. de nat. Deorum, Lib. 2. Diogen. Laert. Lib. 7. Segm. 136, 137. Plutarch de placitis Philos. Lib. 2. c. 3. & aliis locis.

by their science and arts they could perform similar transformations. They attempted and succeeded; nor were they less fortunate in turning water into blood, and in producing frogs; but bitter disappointment attended their future endeavours.

At the time of these events the Egyptians appear to have made some progress in arts and learning; they had therefore most probably discovered some of the wonderful operations of nature, which experimental philosophy displays. May we not on this account reasonably conclude, that there prevailed amongst them an opinion generally attendant upon the first dawnings of knowledge and science; that there are certain arcana or hidden qualities in nature, by means of which many surprising transmutations may be performed. The more enthusiastic of their Philosophers would readily embrace such a pleasing delusion; and the more designing would willingly cherish a notion, by which their influence and power would be so effectually promoted. Is it not probable that it was some such an opinion as this, which

which induced Pharoah to assemble the Egyptian Philosophers,* in order to examine, through their means, whether the works of Moses were really miraculous, or whether he only took advantage of his extraordinary knowledge of natural arcana,† when he pretended to be directed and assisted by the finger of God. If such were the King's views, need we wonder

* To suppose that Pharoah sent for the Magicians to try, whether the God of Israel was really more powerful than the Gods of Egypt, and consequently able to compel him to dismiss his people, accords not with the fundamental principles of pagan theology. For though it represents the Gods as frequently espousing different parties, some being inimical while others are propitious, yet it never encourages it's votaries to expect that one Deity will protect them from the vengeance of another, but rather exhorts them to labour, to appease the angry and adverse Gods by sacrifices and supplications. Moses did not appeal to his miracles, as evidences of the superiority of Jehovah over the Egyptian Deities; but as proofs that he alone was God of the Universe. And the Magicians did not endeavour to counteract or controul Moses, but merely to imitate him, that they might thus invalidate the credentials he produced in support of his divine commission. In this light the subject is considered by Josephus, *Antiq. Jud. Lib. ii. Chap. 13.* See also Shuckford's *Connection*, Vol. II. p. 457, &c. &c. Farmer on *Mir. Ch. iii. and Ch. iv. Sect. i.*

† Many of the ancients imagined that Prodigies, Divinations, &c. might be procured without the Deity's interposition by the use of natural means, and by attention to certain discipline and rules of Art; as appears from *Cic. de Div. Lib. i.* and *Plutarch, Lib. de defectu Oraculorum.*

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that his heart should be hardened, when he saw his own magicians able to imitate the advocates of the Hebrews; or can we deem it surprising, if, even after *they* gave up the contest, he should still feel an inclination to attribute the subsequent performances of Moses to his superior skill.

Was there really any occult science, any hidden powers of nature, by which the Magicians were enabled to produce such extraordinary effects without supernatural assistance?—In an age like the present, when experimental philosophy is so accurately and extensively cultivated, no one can for a moment withhold his negative to this question.

Did they play their parts as jugglers and cheats, pretending to do what they did not, and imposing upon the credulous Pharaoh by Sleight and Artifice?" Would not this have given Moses and Aaron too good an opportunity of detecting their imposture, and exposing them most effectually to the King and his attendants? Besides, if we suppose them capable of substituting serpents, or blood, or frogs,

frogs, with such adroitness, as to exhibit the appearance of a transmutation, will it not be difficult to assign a sufficient reason, why they were not able to substitute lice and flies and locusts with equal skill and ability?*

Were

* Since writing and preaching the above Sermon, further reflection upon the subject, and attention to the arguments of others (particularly of the late learned and elaborate Mr. Farmer, in his excellent work on miracles) have induced the Author to believe the performances of the Magicians, to be nothing more than the effects of artifice and collusion. But for several reasons he deems it almost a duty that the Sermon should appear, as nearly as possible, in it's original form, and rather than make such a complete alteration of it, to place in a Note the principal arguments which have caused this change in his opinion, referring those who wish for further information on the subject to the judicious writer above-mentioned. (Ch. 4. Sect. 1.)

To imagine that God himself gave unexpected success to the Magicians, is it not to make him act in opposition to himself, working some miracles to confront the authority of Moses, at the same time that he was working others to establish it? If Jehovah thus required Pharoah to do and not to do the same thing, with what justice could he afterwards punish him so severely for refusing to dismiss the Israelites?

The appellations by which Moses describes his opposers favour this Hypothesis. For the words, which our translators have rendered *Sorcerers* and *Magicians*, signify rather *Juglers*, who delude the eyes of the spectators by sleight and cunning, and *interpreters*, who undertake to explain things obscure and difficult

Were they then assisted by any evil Dæmons; who performed at their request what difficult. (Vid. Buxtorf and Pagnin, in *vec. et Johan. Cler.* in Gen. xli. 8.)

These Magicians would naturally conclude, that Moses and Aaron were only professors of the same Arts with themselves, and knowing how strongly the prejudices and interest of Pharaoh would bias him in their favour, they would not hesitate to contend for the palm of superior skill, before so partial a judge. Whatever was done by these Egyptians, Moses ascribes to their *inchantments*, or their *covert Artifices and crafty jugglings*, as the words more properly import, (See the comments of B. Kidder, B. Patrick, and Le Clerc, on Exod. vii. 11.)

The phrase made use of by him, in describing their performances, does not assert a perfect conformity between his own works and theirs, but only a general similarity, or perhaps in its strictest sense, merely their “*attempting* some imitation of” Moses: for it is used even when they failed in their attempt. *They did SO—to bring forth lice but they could “not.”* (Ch. viii. 18.)

But why were they not equally successful in producing lice, as in their previous feats of Dexterity?—In the former instances they knew before hand what they were about to undertake, and had time for preparation. Pharaoh did not send for them at first, till after Aaron’s rod had been transformed into a serpent, and previous notice had been publicly given of the two prior plagues; (Ch. vii. 15, 17, and viii. 1. 4.) but the execution of the third instantly succeeded the command; (Ch. viii. 16, 17,) the Magicians had therefore no time for previous contrivance. Besides, the minuteness of the substances, with which they had to do, rendering them imperceptible at

what human power was unable to accomplish?—The author of all things has regulated universal nature by fixed and settled laws, and the very essence of every miracle consists in a violation of these laws. But how can their operation be for a moment interrupted by any power less than that, which originally constituted them? And is it not the height of folly and impiety, to ascribe such ability to any other being than that infinite God, by whom and in whom all things consist.

But if no assistant familiar could be able to perform real transformations, might he not present such delusive appearances before the eyes of Pharaoh and his subjects, as to make them imagine they saw the rods of the magicians changed into serpents, frogs produced, and water converted into blood, though no such things were in reality performed?—To exhibit these delusive appearances would be no less wonderful, no less a breach of the ordinary

at a distance, necessarily subjected them to such near and close inspection, as made it almost impossible for the most dexterous substitution to escape undetected.

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laws of nature, than the absolute completion of the real miracles. And if we suppose the performances of the magicians to be mere deceptions of the senses, what arguments can we advance to rescue the actions of Moses from a similar imputation? If the works appeared to be performed, the spectators could have no certain rules by which they might distinguish a real miraculous effect from a false delusive appearance.

But if the Egyptian Magicians had no mystical arts, no pre-constructed rules by which they could ensure themselves success, is it not surprising that they should make any attempts, and still more astonishing that these attempts should prove successful?—We have no reason to suppose that the King, when he called them together, entertained any *very* sanguine expectations, that they would be able to perform the task enjoined. We have more authority for concluding that, actuated by a full persuasion of the existence of many occult powers in nature, he wished

wished to try what Art could effect, in order to know whether the works of Moses were the result of human ingenuity, or interpositions of divine power. . . What absurdity is there in imagining, that the Magicians themselves were not free from some tincture of the same unfounded notions? The Priests of Baal, in the days of Elijah, could have no grounds for thinking that their incantations would draw down the wished for fire from Heaven; yet, incited by enthusiasm and rage, they tried every extravagant artifice with astonishing perseverance from morning until evening.* Why then might not these Egyptians in a similar manner try every fanciful experiment, though perfectly unwarranted in any expectation of success, by any thing they had before seen. An event, favourable as their most sanguine wishes could aspire to, was bestowed upon their attempts by the Almighty, for the promoting and accomplishing his designs. One of these probably was the administering occasion for more and greater miracles, that his chosen people might be

* 1 Kings xviii. 26, &c

impressed with a more lasting idea of his power, and be thereby induced to pay a more willing and steady obedience to his commands. By means of Pharoah's obstinacy the Majesty and Power of Jehovah were without doubt more amply displayed, God himself declares,* "And in very deed
 " for this cause have I raised thee up, for
 " to shew in thee my power, and that my
 " name may be declared throughout the
 " earth." The success of the Magicians appears to have even exceeded their own expectations: They did not know the extent of their own power, if indeed it be not ridiculous to conceive them endowed with any. For had they proceeded upon certain rules of Art, they would have known before trial what they ought to attempt, and what they would be able to accomplish. But their unsuccessful endeavours prove their ignorance in this respect; and how little they were satisfied with their own performances, is sufficiently evinced by the readiness with which they embraced the first opportunity, af-

* Exod. Ch. ix. 16.

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forded them by the failure of their attempts, to acknowledge that Moses was directed and assisted by power from on high.

On a review of the preceding arguments, are we not warranted in concluding,* That the sage philosophers of Egypt, who opposed the deliverers of Israel, were not enabled to perform miracles by the knowledge of any arcana of nature, or by the rules of any dark and occult science; and that the surprising spectacles they exhibited, were not performed by any agency of the inhabitants of the spiritual world.

But if the two most remarkable relations, which the sacred writers have transmitted to us, do not establish those absurd notions which superstition has taught, and ignorance believed for so many ages, with what hopes can their defenders appeal to scripture for their support?

* Whichsoever of the two hypotheses we adopt.

In the law of Moses this command is delivered: " There shall not be found
 " among you any one that maketh his son
 " or his daughter to pass through the fire,
 " or that useth divination, or an observer
 " of times, or an inchanter, or a witch,
 " or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizzard, or a necromancer." * Again, " A man or a
 " woman that hath a familiar spirit, or
 " that is a wizzard, shall surely be put
 " to death: they shall stone them with
 " stones; their blood shall be upon them." †
 And again, " Thou shalt not suffer a
 " witch to live." ‡ But, it may be argued, Why should the divinely inspired legislator have enumerated these as crimes, and denounced such severe punishment against them, if no one was possessed of such extraordinary and detestable powers? We need not insist upon the deviation from the strict meaning of the original, into which our translators have been drawn by the difference of customs and opinions, and by their strong preju-

* Deut. xviii. 10, 11. † Lev. xx. 27. ‡ Exod. xxii. 18.

dices in favour of the vulgar errors of their own times.* Setting these aside, a moment's reflection upon the cause and intent of the Mosaic institution will shew, how little necessity there is for us to do violence to reason, in complaisance to the letter of these denunciations. God had separated the children of Israel from the rest of mankind, to preserve amongst them the knowledge and worship of the one Supreme, in the midst of that deluge of polytheism and idolatry, which was wide extending its destructive ravages over the face of the globe. Every institution of the law of Moses was therefore intended for this purpose, and directed to the promotion of this design, as

* See Le Clerc and Patrick's Com. on the several texts. Shuckford's Connec. Vol. 2. p. 395. and Scot's Discovery upon the respective Words.

The translation of the Bible now in use, was made at the particular request of James the First, who, a few years before, had written his book on *Dæmonologie*. We cannot help acceding to the opinion of Dr. Hutchinso[n], who imagines, that the translators were induced to adopt phrases favourable to the vulgar superstitions, by their Reverence for the *profound* learning and judgment of their Sovereign. Hutch. on Witchcraft, ch. 14. p. 225.

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its primary object. God did not wish to make them a nation of enlightened and accurate philosophers, nor did he endeavour to correct one speculative principle, which did not necessarily beget immoral and idolatrous actions. The Israelites were just come up out of Egypt, where they had imbibed a strong propensity for those superstitious notions and practices, to which that country was so remarkably enslaved. Attachment to these necessarily drew along with it a degree of affection for those idolatrous rites, with which many of them were so closely connected, as to render their separate existence impossible. These superstitious observances were therefore punished with this exemplary severity, in order to block up this inlet to idolatry, and to preserve the chosen seed of Jacob from going astray after strange gods. Accordingly we find all these offences ranked in the same class with the detestable sacrifice of their children, offered by the worshippers of Molock to that horrid idol. Amongst a nation
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tion so ready to give credit to their pretensions, there must always be found designing men, who would arrogate to themselves extraordinary powers. These must necessarily be considered as infamous seducers of the people, as men who were erecting the standard of rebellion against their sovereign, and throwing down the altars of their god. For, by the covenant made with the children of Israel, Jehovah was constituted both their God and King. Consistently therefore with the whole tenor of this institution, all these pretenders to supernatural qualifications were as justly punished, as if absolutely possessed of the attributes they claimed.

Such is the support which the sacred writings afford to the superstitious belief of more than human powers, in reputed witches and conversers with familiar spirits. If reason be consulted, every light it affords serves strongly to point out the folly and extravagance of the notion. In spite then of the general reception, which

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this once favourite opinion has met with in the days of ancient ignorance, it may be deservedly classed amongst those "prophane and old wives fables," which the apostle exhorts us to reject, as inimical to the pure religion of the gospel.

Is it not a lamentable reflection, that for ages these absurdities should have been cherished with the greatest care, as valuable truths; and that many innocent creatures should have fallen victims to the general bigotry and madness? But how far more shocking to observe, that many of those, who were peculiarly called by their situation to labour for the instruction and enlightening of mankind, have ever been the most zealous defenders of error and absurdity? But let *us* profit by their example, and strenuously endeavour each in his proper sphere to dispel the mists of ignorance and superstition from the minds of those around us, sensible that the removal of any foolish error is one step towards establishing true and pure religion upon a firm

firm and solid basis. And let us not only discountenance and refuse every prophane and old wives fable; but attending to the subsequent advice of the apostle, " Let us diligently exercise ourselves unto godliness; for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."*

* 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

SERMON

firm and solid basis. And let us not only
discontinence and refuse every profane
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to come.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ECCLES. i. 9.

There is no new Thing under the Sun.

TO trace this memorable observation of the wise preacher through its full extent, to examine its justice, and display its truth, is a task I shall at present decline. It is my intention to consider the text solely with reference to that one subject, which the peculiar circumstances of the day more immediately recommend to our consideration. Having, on the preceding occasions, examined the two most extraordinary narratives, and also other passages of the Old Testament, with a view to substantiate

tiate this proposition; that the sacred authors give no support or countenance to the vulgarly received notions of witchcraft, I shall now endeavour to shew, that these cannot have received in more recent times any sufficient and incontrovertible sanction. God from the beginning has bound universal nature by fixed and permanent laws, nor has he ever suffered them to be for a moment interrupted or suspended by any created being in opposition to his will. The power of working miracles he has reserved to himself alone, and to this have his favoured messengers always appealed, as the peculiar and indisputable evidence of his interposition. The most remote ages furnish us with examples of pretenders to extraordinary powers, who imposed upon the credulity and ignorance of the undiscerning; and the boasted abilities of more modern times have been equally the offspring of superstition and knavery. For in this respect, “ there is no new thing under the sun.”

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The powers of man have increased, and may probably yet increase beyond what we at present can conceive, by the increased knowledge of the efficacy of natural causes; yet it is impossible for these causes, though under the most skilful direction, ever to produce miracles, or effects repugnant to the settled laws of the universe. That any human being is, or ever can be, able by his own unaided power in the smallest degree to interrupt the regular course of nature, none, I imagine, will be found hardy enough to maintain. All modern advocates for vulgar miracles, are therefore obliged to have recourse to the agency of more potent spiritual beings, who have covenanted to submit themselves to the commands of feeble mortals.* To point out an adequate reason for their entering into such a compact, would require more than common sagacity; and admitting the agreement to exist, what evidence have we of their ability to perform their part of the extravagant engagement?

* King James's *Demonologie*, Book 2. ch. 2. Bodin des *Sorciers*, lib. 1. ch. 2. Scot's *Discovery*, book 3. ch. 1.

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If we apply to reason, what information does she afford us? Reason points out to us, but one omnipotent Being, who is capable of acting every where, and in what manner soever he pleases, whose omnipotence is the only adequate cause we can discover of every miraculous effect. That there are created beings superior to man seems highly probable, but the exact extent of their power, reason cannot discover; that they are confined to their own proper sphere of action, appears most agreeable to the general œconomy of nature. The close connection between the different orders of beings, in this system of ours, does not prove any necessary communication between the inhabitants of other systems, and this lower world: Nor can we argue from our mutual dependence upon each other, that they have any more power over us than we have over them. It is reasonable to suppose, that spiritual beings have powers superior to those of men; but we cannot justly conclude from thence, that this material world is equally subject to their influence.

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The general idea we form of them is, that they are void of solidity. Then how can they act upon matter by impulse, or what necessary connection can we discern between their volition and the motion of material beings? * Is it not inconsistent also with the goodness of God, that he should suffer the laws of nature to be controuled at the will of any created being? For then the harmony and regularity of both the natural and moral world must soon be confounded, and consequently the designs of infinite power and wisdom for the benefit of his creatures, be completely defeated. Besides, experience does not afford us any satisfactory proofs that they at present do, or ever have performed miracles in this lower world. †

If we consult revelation, does it ascribe to them any such faculties?—The blessed

* The late Dr. Isaac Watts has treated this subject, with his usual ingenuity and acuteness, in his *Philosophical Essays* on various subjects, Essay 6th.

† See more on this subject in *Farmer on Miracles*, ch. 2. *Dr. Douglas's Criterion*, and *Dr. Hutchinson on Witchcraft*.

angels are represented as God's ministers, delivering no messages to man but what they first receive from him, and never interfering in the affairs of our system, but in obedience to his express commands. For " they are all ministering spirits doing his commandments, and hearken-
 " ing unto the voice of his words."* And if good angelic beings, who enjoy the approbation and favour of their Creator, have no power of working miracles at their pleasure, no dominion over mankind, is it not folly to imagine those capable of such wonderful exertions, who by their transgressions have incurred the divine displeasure? God has not enlarged their powers in reward of their disobedience, but " has cast them down into hell; and
 " reserved them in everlasting chains, †
 " under darkness, unto the judgment of

* Gen. xix. 13. Pl. ciii. 20, 21. Is. vi. 1, &c. Dan. viii. 15, 16. Heb. i. 14. and Ch. ii. 5. Rev. xix. 10.

† Into Tartarus (*ταρταρος*) How much soever we may be at a loss to form a precise idea of the place here referred to, we cannot reasonably imagine it to be their kingdom, but rather their everlasting prison.

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“ the great day.” * “ The scripture
 “ never ascribes to the devil the ability of
 “ revealing secrets, foretelling future
 “ events, or working miracles; never
 “ guards mankind against being deceived
 “ by the outward effects of his miracu-
 “ lous power or inspiration; necessary as
 “ such a caution would have been, had he
 “ been able to inspire prophecies, and to
 “ work miracles; and earnestly as it
 “ warns against a less danger, the pre-
 “ tences of men to divine miracles and
 “ inspiration, when they are not sent and
 “ assisted by God.” † In short, in almost
 every page of the sacred volume is this
 important truth inculcated; That “ Je-

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. The commonly received interpretation of these passages has been adhered to, as the only one which affords any support to the notion, that evil spirits ever interfere in terrestrial affairs. But it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge my assent to the opinion of those who contend, that by the *ἀγγελοι* here mentioned, the apostles did not mean *evil spiritual beings*, who rebelled in heaven against their almighty Sovereign; but rather the *messengers*, who, being sent from the camp of Israel to view the land of Canaan, “ brought up an evil report of the land,” thus seducing the people to murmur against Jehovah, and distrust his promises.

† Farmer on Mir. ch. 3. sect. 1. p. 153.

“ hovah he is God in heaven above, and
 “ upon the earth beneath, there is none
 “ else ;” and “ he only doeth wondrous
 “ things ?” *

But, admitting that any created being is at liberty to controul the course of nature, without the exprefs authority and commiffion of the Almighty, what rule can we have for diftinguifhing between the wonderful works of thefe petty rulers, and the interpositions of the Supreme ? They are both alike appeals to our fenfes, both equally furpafs our conceptions ; and are both entitled to equal regard. Behold, then the dreadful confequences ! Thofe miracles, to which we are accuftomed to appeal as infallible evidences of the truth, *may* have been exhibited in fupport of pernicious error ; nor can we prove that Mofes was not a lying prophet, and Jefus Chrift a vile profligate impoftor.

* Deut. iv. 39. Pf. lxxii. 19. compare 2 Sam. vii. 22. Pf. lxxxvi. 10. cxxxix. 1—12. If. xlv. 5, 6, 7, 18, 21, 22. Ch. xliii. 10—13. Jer. xxxi. 35.

Farmer on Miracles, ch. 3. feét. 5.

Is it not impious to imagine that God hath left his creatures so open to be seduced by every lying vanity, so liable to fall into the snare of every wicked deceiver? Besides, the very foundation of filial reverence and pious obedience, towards our eternal Father and King, must be entirely overwhelmed. For if any other beings can suspend the laws and disturb the order of the universe, is it not incumbent upon us to worship them, to appease their wrath and obtain their favor? And upon what can God found his claim to our exclusive homage? Has not such an opinion been in all ages fatal to true piety, has it not given birth to an endless train of ancient pagan idolatries, and modern antichristian superstitions? But if those extraordinary performances, which vulgar credulity believes and ignorance too generally records and trembles at, are found to exceed the capacities of created beings, must not all such idle stories be void of any real foundation? For surely it is most impious to suppose, that God himself can ever interfere in an unusual manner,

ner, merely to gratify the wanton caprice or angry resentment of a weak, if not a wicked child of mortality.

If we had no other reason for doubting the truth of those stories, which the abettors of witchcraft propagate, our faith must certainly receive a violent shock, by only considering to whom these unusual faculties are in general ascribed. To wretches bending beneath the load of years and infirmities, too often oppressed by the additional burden of pinching poverty, and in their appearance remarkable for nothing but the distressing spectacle of squalid misery which they exhibit. Had the Devil or his subjects the powers ascribed to them, and had witches authority to command and direct their efforts, they would surely first of all require relief from their distresses, if not a plentiful supply of every article of terrestrial luxury and enjoyment. Is it not absurd to imagine, that any one should enter into a compact with the Prince of darkness, to do his errands of mischief, without receiving
any

any better return for their labours, than poverty here and misery hereafter? It is certainly not enough that they should sometimes make nightly excursions to some distant region, there to revel upon imaginary dainties;* dainties imaginary as their renowned witchcrafts, which only have existence in the idle fears of the credulous, and the diseased imagination of the melancholy Hypochondriac.†

Against such strong reasoning, what do the advocates of those gross superstitions oppose? A tedious train of absurd or fanciful facts. If any foolish experiment has appeared to be attended by the expected event, how often has it been construed into undeniable ocular demonstration of guilt? If a poor creature, irritated by the insulting petulancy of some insolent and unfeeling wretches, and unable through

* Dr. Hutchinson on Witchcraft, Ch. 13. p. 211.

† For an account of the extravagances which authors have gravely related, concerning these meetings of witches, and concerning their Sabbaths, we refer the curious to Bodin de Sorciers, Liv. 2. Chap. 4. 5. Scot's Discovery, Book 3. Ch. 2. 3. King James's Demonologie, Book 2. Chap. 3.

infirmity

infirmity or want, to obtain more substantial redress, has been driven to vent the passion of her soul in imprecations, and some misfortune has soon afterwards happened to any of them, this has frequently been received as incontrovertible proof of her diabolical machinations. If any one, possessing an imagination crowded with notions of witchcraft, has had the misfortune to be afflicted with any unusual disorder, how strongly has he been inclined to attribute it to the agency of some associate of the infernal powers? Let this imagination once acquire firm root in the mind, and in vain will you endeavour to eradicate it by the force of reason. Soon does memory, from the recollection of some peevish altercation, furnish an object of suspicion, and from that moment every action is viewed through a false medium: occurrences otherwise indifferent now assume the form of presumptions, and fancied evidences are tortured into undeniable proofs. Thus upon pretexts the most frivolous and absurd, has the peace, nay too often the lives of our fellow-creatures been

been sacrificed. Frequently has interested knavery thrown an indelible stigma upon innocence, and sometimes pursued its poor devoted victim even to destruction.

But one difficulty, may our adversaries triumphantly say, yet remains unremoved. Did not many confess their guilt? Have there not been numerous instances of those who have openly acknowledged their abominable witchcrafts, and impious league with the Dæmons of darkness? With sorrow, not unmingled with shame, do I confess that the number of such has indeed been considerable. Alas! poor human nature, how frail, how imperfect are all thy vaunted excellencies! How do I abashed, behold thine honour levelled in the dust! What poignant grief must arise in the breast of the humane, when contemplating the effects of an imagination disordered and depressed by melancholy! It has exalted poor insane wretches in their own idea to royal and imperial dignity, and caused some even to arrogate to themselves the sublime title of the Mes-

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siah:

fiah:* others it has depressed beneath humanity, while they have considered themselves as brutes, inanimate bodies, or beings composed of glass. But if a diseased fancy can work such strange and deplorable effects, can we be at all surprised, that persons whose imaginations had long brooded over the notions of witches and witchcraft, should acquire a full conviction that they were themselves possessed of such extravagant powers? This false association being once completely formed, it would make the same impression upon the mind, as if it were perfectly true. How easily then, would they be persuaded, that they had performed such acts as their imagined qualifications enabled them to do, and how readily would they acknowledge them? And why should it excite our astonishment that many miserable creatures, harraffed by importunities and overcome by disgraceful and iniquitous

* There is no necessity for an elaborate research into history to prove the strong effects of a disordered imagination, when our own times furnish us with a Richard Brothers and his serious supporters.

tortures,

tortures, have been reduced to the confession of crimes, which they never could be able to commit.*

But if these superstitious notions are false and groundless, whence had they their first origin, and how did they acquire such deep root in the minds of men? —When we consider that these opinions first sprang up in the dark ages of heathen antiquity, of which scarce any record has survived the ravages of time, we must acknowledge this to be a question of some difficulty; yet a little reflection may perhaps afford us something like a satisfactory answer. Fear is one of the strongest passions of the human mind, and capable of preserving the most complete and permanent influence over it. Upon this basis all the idolatrous rites of the ancient Pagan nations appear to have been erected; all their religious cere-

* Will not all these confessions be invalidated by applying to them this excellent rule, *Confessio rei impossibilis non est confessio sanæ mentis*; the confession of an impossibility is not the confession of a sound mind?

monies being intended to deprecate the anger, rather than merit the favor of their Gods. This slavish fear was encouraged by the crafty priests, because it gave them a more unlimited influence over the people; and connived at by the civil rulers, because it disposed the subject to submit more tamely to absolute tyranny. The former, as engaged in the immediate service of the Gods, claimed the privilege of a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with them, which claim the people might be induced to acquiesce in by some remaining tradition of God's intercourse with the first patriarchs. On this foundation they built their pretensions to divination and other extraordinary performances. By a monopoly of the little learning of their times, and the help of numerous impostors and juggling tricks, they maintained their own and the reputation of their Gods. The *sacred* professors of these arts generally met with protection and encouragement from the state, on account of their important services to those in power; but inferior pretenders, who, wishing

wishing to prey upon the weakness and errors of their fellows, made large additions to the idle tales, by which the credulous multitude was amused and misled, were publicly condemned in almost every nation without being exterminated.* By these means superstition was heaped upon superstition, till at last that immense fabric of absurdities was raised, which has so long held the ignorant in bondage, and which as yet time has not been able to destroy.

The apostle Paul has warned us against giving credit to such “profligate venders of lies.” “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed

* Tacitus calls these, *Genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostra vetabitur semper et retinebitur*. Hist. Lib. 1. Jamblichus, in his treatise upon the mysteries of the Ægyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians, gives us reason to conclude, that the jealous Priests, stigmatised these intruders into their province as men rejected by the Gods, and abandoned to the society of evil Dæmons, by which connexion they became like their associates, full of malice and mischief.

“ to

“ to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils;* speaking lies in hypocrisy,” or rather, *thro’ the hypocrisy of liars*, who strive to support their deadly errors† by false legendary miracles, whom every pious christian should avoid as men “ who having their consciences seared with an “ hot iron.”†

All such notions appear to have been treated by the first propagators of christianity as wicked fables; and in one of the early christian councils at the city of Ancyra they received a severe censure, and the believers of them were con-

* *δαίμονιον*, of Dæmons, that is, the souls of men deified after death.

† Of the divinity and worship of deadmen (*canonised saints*) ascribing to them the power of working miracles, and making them a sort of mediators between God and men; an impious absurdity which had its origin with the pagan Priests and Philosophers, who ascribed to such Dæmons the immediate inspection and government of this lower world. Plutarch de defectu Orac. Plato in Sympos. Apuleius (de deo Socrat.) says, *Cuncta cælestium voluntate, numine et auctoritate, sed dæmonum obsequio et opera et ministerio fieri arbitrandum est.*

† 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

demned

demned as infidels and worse than pagans.*
 Nevertheless, when heathen philosophy
 began to be grafted upon christianity, the
 purity

* This council, holden in the year 314 at Ancyra, the metropolis of the province of Galatia, was composed of 18 bishops, from whose decrees the following curious extract is recommended to the perusal of our readers: *Illud etiam non est omittendum, quod quædam sceleratæ mulieres, retro post satanam conversæ, dæmonum illusionibus & phantasmatibus subductæ, credunt et profitentur se nocturnis horis cum Diana paganorum dea, vel cum Herodiade & innumera multitudine mulierum, equitare super quasdam bestias, & multa terrarum spatia intempestæ noctis spatio pertransire, ejusque jussionibus velut dominæ obedire, & certis noctibus ad ejus servitium evocari. Sed utinam hæ solæ in sua perfidia periissent, et non multos secum in infidelitatis interitum pertraxissent. Nam innumera multitudo, hac falsa opinione decepta, hæc vera esse credit, et credendo a recta fide deviat, et in errore paganorum revolvitur, cum aliquid divinitatis aut numinis extra unum Deum arbitratur &c. Omnibus itaque publice annuntiandum est, quod qui talia et his similia credit, fidem perdit. Et qui fidem rectam in domino non habet, hic non est ejus, sed illius in quem credit, id est, Diaboli. Nam de Domino nostro scriptum est; Omnia per ipsum facta sunt. Quisquis ergo credit posse fieri aliquam creaturam, aut in melius aut in deterius immutari, aut transformari in aliam speciem vel similitudinem, nisi ab ipso creatore, qui omnia fecit, & per quem omnia facta sunt proculdubio infidelis est & pagano deterior. (Concil. general. per Binnium, tom. i. p. 275.)* This also ought not to be omitted, that certain wicked women, led astray after Satan, and seduced by the deceptions and delusions of Dæmons, believe and profess that they ride in the night upon certain beasts with the heathen goddess Diana, with Herodias and women without number, and travel over an immense tract of country; that they obey
 her

purity of the gospel became contaminated, and the innocence and integrity of it's teachers corrupted. Ignorance again spread it's dominion far and wide, and the christian priesthood, forsaking the steps of their divine master, deviated into the paths of their idolatrous predecessors. Like them they strove to establish their empire over the minds of the people: instead therefore of labouring to extirpate, they continued to nourish those absurdities, which paganism had bequeathed to

her commands as their mistrefs, and on particular nights are called out to wait upon her. But it would be well if they perished alone in their perfidy, and did not draw many along with them into the same destructive abyfs of infidelity. For a vast multitude, deceived by this false notion, believe these things, and by so believing fall from the true faith, and relapse into the error of Paganism, when they suppose that there does exist any species of divinity or deity besides the one Supreme God.—It is therefore necessary to declare unto all, that whosoever believes such things forsakes the faith. And he that possesses not the true faith in the Lord, is none of his, but rather his, in whom he believes, that is, the Devil's. For it is written concerning our Lord, all things were made by him; whosoever therefore believes that any creature can be made, or even altered for the better or the worse, or suffer any transformation in species or appearance, except by the Creator himself, who made all things, and by whom all things were created, he without doubt is an infidel, and worse than a pagan.

mankind.

mankind.* They attributed a power of working miracles, to evil angels, whom they considered as the real objects of ancient heathen worship, and persecuted their fancied human associates as enemies of God. With what injustice and inhumanity this process was conducted, the edicts of the Popes and the acts of the inquisitors sufficiently testify.† To the united force
I of

* The various sects of Gnostics early introduced into the christian world the old heathen doctrine of the two principles, the good and the evil; Manes or Manichæus grafted upon christianity a large portion of the Persian mythology, and his opinions were in a great measure embraced by Priscillian and his followers. The council of Bracara in Spain, holden in the year 563, censured these extravagant notions concerning the power of the Devil or evil principle. In one of their decrees, they anathematized all those who believe the Devil can make any creature, or so much as raise storms and tempests by his own authority. *Si quis credit, quod aliquantas in mundo creaturas Diabolus fecerit, & tonitrua & fulgura & tempestates & siccitates ipse Diabolus sua auctoritate faciat, sicut Priscillianus dixit, anathema sit.* Nevertheless many of these absurd notions gained ground in the succeeding ages of ignorance and degeneracy, and became the basis of all those extravagant superstitions, which afterwards received the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authority.

† Popish ignorance and superstition having now attained the zenith of their power, Pope Innocent VIII. in the year 1484,
issued

of superstition and knavery, multitudes
fell a lamentable sacrifice. This intolerant
fury was gradually checked by the
advancement

issued his memorable bull, directed to the Inquisitors of Almain, &c. empowering them to search out and cause to be burnt, all such as were guilty of the *heresy* of witchcraft. The tenor of this bull will best appear from a short extract :
Innocentius Episcopus, Servus Servorum Dei, &c. Sane nuper ad nostrum non sine ingenti molestia pervenit auditum, quod in nonnullis partibus Alemannæ, &c. complures utriusque sexus personæ, a fide catholica deviantes, cum Dæmonis, Incubis & Succubis abuti, ac suis incantationibus, carminibus & conjurationibus, aliisque nephandis superstitionibus & fortilegiis, excessibus, criminibus & delictis, mulierum partus, animalium foetus, terræ fruges, vinearum uvas & arborum fructus, nec non homines, mulieres, pecora, pecudes & alia diversorum generum animalia, vineas, quoque pomaria, prata, pascua, blada, frumenta & alia terræ legumina perire, suffocari & extinguere, facere & procurare, ipsosque homines, mulieres, jumenta, pecora, pecudes, diris tam intrinsecis quam extrinsecis doloribus & tormentis afficere & excruciare, ac eisdem homines ne gignere, and mulieres ne concipere, virosque ne uxoribus, et mulieres ne viris actus conjugales reddere valeant, impedire. Fidem præterea ipsam, &c. abnegare, &c. Nos igitur, &c. auctoritate Apostolica tenore præsentium statuimus, &c. hujusmodi inquisitionis officium exequi, ipsasque personas, quas in præmissis culpabiles reppererint, juxta eorum demerita corrigere, incarcerare, punire & mulctare, &c. invocato ad hoc, si opus fuerit, auxilio brachii secularis. (vid. Jac. Sprenger, *Malleum Malef.*—Barth. Spin. de strigibus, c. 3.) Innocent, bishop, a servant of the servants of God, &c. We have heard not without great sorrow, that in many parts of Almain, &c.
great

advancement of learning, and the reformation of religious error, till at length a final period has happily been put to such abominable

I 2

minable

great numbers of both sexes, forsaking the catholic faith, abuse their own bodies with devils of both sexes; and with enchantments, charms, conjurations, and other wicked superstitions and forceries, excesses and crimes, destroy and cause to be extinguished, the births of women, the foetuses of cattle, the fruits of the ground and of the trees, and even men, women, cattle and other kinds of animals; they blast vines, fruit-trees, pastures, corn-fields, and other productions of the earth; they afflict and torment men, women, cattle and other animals with dreadful internal and external pains and tortures, and deprive men and women of the powers of procreation, &c. They also renounce the faith, &c. We therefore, &c. by our Apostolical authority, appoint by these presents, &c. to execute the office of inquisition, and to correct, imprison, punish, fine, &c. according to their demerits, those persons whom they shall find guilty of the crimes aforesaid, &c. calling in for this purpose, if it be necessary, the assistance of the secular arm.

The idle superstitions of witchcraft being thus methodised and sanctioned by the infallible head of the church, the fury of ecclesiastical persecution was now let loose against all the fancied associates of the dæmoniacal powers, and extended its horrid ravages over countries consecrated to the Prince of Benevolence and Peace. In the year after the promulgation of this bull, the inquisitor Cumanus burnt 41 poor women for witches, in the country of Burlia. (H. Instit. p. 105.) And Aliciat in his Parerga says, that one inquisitor burnt 100 in Piedmont, and proceeded daily to burn more till the people rose against him and chased him out of the country. A few years

minable public sacrifices, though the torch of private persecution, is too often lighted at the yet remaining embers of superstitious credulity.

May true knowledge spread abroad its benign, its virtuous influence, till every foolish superstition, every antichristian bigotry is totally eradicated from the mind of man. And let us labour with all our powers to hasten this desirable event; yet, contemplating the great mistakes which others have

years afterwards, more than 500 (says the Jesuit Delrio in his preface, p.3.) were executed in the city of Geneva, in the space of three months. In the year 1524, 1000 were burnt in the diocese of Cumo, and 100 per ann. for several years together, (Barth. Spin. cap. 12.) Many more instances of these superstitious cruelties are given by Dr. Hutch, ch. 2.

In the hands of a bigoted, ambitious Clergy, and a superstitious, servile Laity, these extravagant criminations became an excellent engine for promoting the views of the popish church. The Priests of that church eagerly propagated the opinion, that all those, who opposed their usurpations and errors, were leagued with the Prince of darkness, and that heresy and sorcery were indissolubly united. (Delrio disq. mag.) By this means many poor Waldenses and other Protestants, suffered for the imputed sin of witchcraft, when their abominable dissent from the *holy* Church of Rome was their real crime. Truth indeed obliges me to confess that some Protestants have retorted the accusation, and charged fifteen Popes in succession from Silvester II. to Gregory VII. with being Magicians.

fallen

fallen into, let us proceed with caution, and with diffidence in our own abilities. Because we have been enabled to advance further in the investigation of truth than our ancestors, let us not imagine that we are endowed with any additional perfections. Conscious that our judgment is circumscribed, and our reason thwarted by the same infirmities and passions, ("for there is no new thing under the sun") let us cultivate an affectionate regard for the prejudices and infirmities of others. Are we ourselves strong? It is our duty to bear with the weak. Have we been able to overcome the delusion of any error? It is incumbent upon us to instruct others with sincerity, with meekness, with gentleness and goodwill. And may the God of truth direct all our investigations, and prosper all our endeavours, to the advancement of his glory and the happiness of our fellow-creatures; so that, at the close of our probation here, we may look back upon our past conduct with satisfaction, in joyful confidence that we shall receive his approbation.

SERMON

...let us proceed with caution
and up courage in our own studies
because we have been charged to advance
further in the investigation of earth than
our ancestors, let us not imagine that we
are endowed with any additional powers
tionally. Questions that our present is
circumstances, but our reason is warranted
best (and) instrument and nature, (for
space is no more than under the sun) let
us observe the after-formation of the
universe and the nature of matter. And
we ourselves through it is our duty to
learn with the world. Have we been able
to overcome the belief of any error? Is
it independent upon us to believe others
it is necessary with ourselves with gen-
erals and goods. And may the God
of earth direct all our investigations, and
protect all our endeavors, to the ad-
vancement of his glory and the happiness
of our fellow-creatures; to which, as the
close of our proposition here, we may look
back upon our past conduct with satisfac-
tion. It is joyful to consider that we shall
receive his approbation.

EXAMON

SERMON IV.

PSALM xxxi. 6.

*I have hated them that regarding Vanities ;
but I trust in the Lord.*

WHEN last I appeared before you, I endeavoured to add to what had already been advanced, every observation, which appeared to be of any considerable importance upon that interesting subject, to which the peculiar circumstances of our assembling more immediately directed our attention. Being therefore unexpectedly called upon once more to address you from this place, on the same extraordinary topic, pardon me, if I indulge a confident hope that you will easily
be

be induced to spare your censures, though this discourse should have little or nothing of novelty to recommend it. While however we in some measure re-trace the path we have already troden, some hitherto scarcely perceived object may perhaps present itself to our view, which may tend to increase and establish our aversion to the lying vanities of vulgar superstition, and induce us with the Psalmist to *hate* all those who regard them.

To *hate* a fellow-creature! Who that has an heart possessing the smallest spark of humanity, does not shrink from the idea with a sacred horror? And could the inspired servant of God applaud, and by his own example recommend such inveterate persecuting malevolence? Surely this is impossible.—The language of the man after God's own heart appears to have been this,* “When

* This Psalm appears to have been composed in the midst of some pressing difficulty, or rather immediately after some extraordinary deliverance. Why should we not refer it to some of those critical situations, to which David was reduced, when flying from the persecuting malevolence of Saul, when so great was his danger, that without a signal interposition of Providence, his escape seemed almost impossible?

“involved

'involved in difficulties and distresses, I
 'have not relied upon vain, superstitious
 'observances, I have not consulted any of
 'the various tribe of prophane diviners;
 'such practices I have always regarded
 'with abhorrence and the observers of
 'them with detestation. But my confi-
 'dence has always been placed in the
 'living God, and to him alone have I ap-
 'plied for direction.' He could not possi-
 bly be ignorant of the denunciations,
 which the law pronounced against the in-
 famous practicers of idolatrous incantati-
 ons, how then must he have been offended
 at all those, who disobediendly confided in
 such foolish delusions; how must he have
 burned with indignation against all those
 knavish impostors, who preyed upon the
 credulity of their weak brethren. For
 such he must necessarily have considered
 all the pretenders to supernatural power
 and knowledge, when he stigmatized all
 their boasted performances as "lying va-
 nities." And every page of Scripture,
 when candidly examined, breathes the
 same spirit. It is in the same strain of

K

pointed

pointed reprobation, that God addresses his chosen people: "Hearken not ye to
 "your prophets, nor to your diviners,
 "nor to your dreamers, nor to your in-
 "chanters, nor to your forcerers:—For
 "they prophecy a lie unto you."* By
 what stronger term could the exercisers
 of such arts be branded than that of lyars;
 or in what more pointed manner could
 their practice be marked as the sole off-
 spring of human fraud and artifice? It
 must be acknowledged, that viewing them
 through the medium of prejudice and
 mistranslation, many sincere and not weak
 believers have conceived the sacred pages
 to speak a different language. How lau-
 dable therefore every effort to draw aside
 the veil which obumbrates their immacu-
 late splendor, and purge them from those
 blots, with which infidelity has, with too
 great appearance of reason, exultingly re-
 proached them?

To what has been, with this design,
 laid before you on former occasions, one

* Jer. xxvii. 9, 10. Compare Ch. xxix. 8, 9.

useful observation may without impropriety be added. The scriptures more intent upon making men good than learned, have always accommodated their diction to the conceptions and prejudices of those addressed. They give indeed to vain boasters the appellations of prophets, diviners, magicians, witches, and the various other epithets, which ignorance has ever bestowed, or knavery assumed. But this is no more a positive proof of their possessing answerable powers, than the corporeality of the Deity is evinced by such expressions as, *the hand of God*; or the modern system of natural philosophy, which rests on the adamantine basis of demonstration, is overthrown by Joshua's saying, *the Sun stood still*.*

* A careful examination of those passages of Scripture, where forceries and witchcrafts are mentioned, will be sufficient to convince the unprejudiced, that nothing more is meant thereby, than some of the various modes of divination, practised by the idolatrous heathen, those vain attempts to dive into futurity, which tended to alienate the heart from the true God. Compare 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23. 2 Kings, ix. 22. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. II. xlvii. 12, 13. Jer. xxvii. 9, 10. Ezek. xxi. 21, 22. Mich. v. 12, 13. Nahum iii. 4.

It would be almost culpable not to embrace this opportunity of making a remark upon the account of Simon of Samaria, which is transmitted to us in the Acts of the Apostles. “ But there was a
 “ certain man called Simon, which before
 “ time in the same city used forcery, and
 “ *bewitched* the people of Samaria, giving
 “ out, that himself was some great one.
 “ And to him they had regard, because
 “ that of a long time he had *bewitched*
 “ them with forceries.”*

Those excellent men, to whom we are indeed exceedingly indebted for our translation of the sacred records, involuntarily drawn into an error by their own preconceived notions, have here represented as supernatural effects, those *juggling tricks*, by which the artful impostor *astonished* the ignorant Samaritans. For the original words imply no more, and it is rather singular, that they should in one verse have rendered the same verb

* Ch. viii. 9, &c.

bewitched,

bewitched,* which in another they have only translated *wondered*, when describing the effect, which the real miracles of Philip had upon Simon himself. “ Then “ Simon himself believed also, and when “ he was baptized, he continued with “ Philip and *wondered*, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

The principal evidence which reason furnishes us with, in this curious and singular investigation, has already been examined. The general conclusion which we have endeavoured to establish, would be considerably strengthened by a candid examination into the circumstances of those cases, which have received the sanction of different courts of justice, as indisputable proofs of diabolical guilt. These

* ἐξίστημι. It may not be improper to transcribe from the original, verses, 9, 11, & 13. Ἀνὴρ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Σίμων, προὔπῃρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ΕΞΙΣΤΩΝ το ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας, λέγων εἶναί τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν.-----Προσεῖχον δὲ αὐτῷ, διὰ τὸ ἰκανῶς χρῶναι ταῖς μαγείαις ΕΞΙΣΤΑΚΕΝΑΙ αὐτός.-----Ὁ δὲ Σίμων καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίστευσε, καὶ βαπτισθεὶς ἦν προσκαρτερῶν τῷ Φιλίππῳ· θεωρῶν τε σημεῖα καὶ δυνάμεις μεγάλας γινομένας, ΕΞΙΣΤΑΤΟ. Vid. Smidium in Act. viii. 13.

again

again we might compare with others, where imposture has been detected, or an heated and deranged imagination discovered.* This however, would be a task much more tedious than useful, and we may be sufficiently convinced of their general absurdity and iniquity, by considering the nature of the evidence, and the rules of judging, which superstition has in such cases usually had recourse to. Some of these are indeed too fanciful and foolish to bear a serious recital;† but the iniquity

* See Scot's Discovery, Dr. Hutchinson on Witchc. Ch. 4. & 15.

† A man may reasonably doubt, whether he should more indulge his indignation or laughter, to find such silly tests esteemed adequate proofs of guilt, as, the accused parties not being able to repeat the Lord's Prayer without mistakes; being outweighed by the Church Bible; swimming with thumbs and toes tied across; being unable to shed tears; having the Devil's Mark, an apparent sore rendered insensible of pain, and which might appear like the bite of a Flea; or secret Teats, (like Warts or Moles,) at which their imps were allowed to suck, an absurd notion almost peculiar to this Country, where feeding and rewarding imps was made a capital Felony: these imps might appear, if their coming to take their accustomed repast was watched, in the shapes of Cats, Dogs, Rats, Mice, Birds, Flies, Toads, Fleas, &c. they might also be kept in pots

iniquity of others will scarcely allow them to be passed over unnoticed. While trials for the crime of witchcraft were fashionable, it was deemed just to apply tortures to the accused wretches, or to afflict and harass them by want of food and privation of rest, till from the disordered and distracted mind something was extorted, which appeared like a confession of guilt. And if, when rest and food had restored the understanding, this were denied, it was construed into a proof of *diabolical* obstinacy rather than a presumption of innocence. On these trials the testimony of persons was received, whose infamous characters rendered them incapable of being admitted as witnesses in other cases. Against one accused of any one particular act of forcery, any matter might be admitted in evidence, however foreign to the fact in question, even though it had occurred at the most distant period. If the afflicted

pots or other vessels, were they would stink detestably ; so that if any poor accused wretche's house emitted a disagreeable smell, it was a sure sign that imps were kept there, though these nasty elves could not be found. See Dalton's Country Justice.—King James's Dæmon.—Sad. debel—Bodin, &c.

party

party fancied he saw his supposed tormentors, it was esteemed strong proof against them: even the ill fame of a person's ancestors was accounted a reasonable cause of suspicion; and to crown all, it was received as a maxim, that the established practices of courts of judicature, when taking cognizance of this diabolical crime, were not to be examined and canvassed by reason. Before courts constituted upon these principles, and judges acting by these rules, what accused person could have the smallest hopes of vindicating his innocence? For there prejudice must triumph over reason; fancy usurp the throne of judgement; suspicion and proof, accusation and conviction be completely confounded. Yet to the result of such idle and iniquitous investigations alone, can the advocate of these superstitious vanities appeal, in support of their real and solid existence. And with what heartfelt sorrow must we add, for such weak and wicked imputations, have thousands of our fellow-creatures felt the agonizing scourge, perished on the accursed tree,

or

or breathed out their spirit in the consuming flames. Alas! such are the baneful effects of superstition.

View the progress of this pernicious spirit, under whatever form and at whatever period, it has intruded itself amongst the sons of men, and it will ever be found the enemy of humanity, virtue and piety. It's inevitable tendency is to alienate the heart from God, to establish a dependence upon idle ceremonies and vain observances. Wherever this hateful tyrant has been able to erect her throne, pure and undefiled religion has been driven into exile and oblivion. How is this lamentable truth confirmed, by the united testimony of every page of Pagan history! How is it confirmed, by a dismal view of those long protracted years of ignorance, when papal superstition triumphantly tyrannized over the western world, almost extinguishing the pure light of revelation, and expelling divine truth from the regions of christendom! But to past times we have scarce occasion to appeal,

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if

if we do but contemplate with attention the present state of mankind. The knowledge and love of the true God appear just so far to have advanced their power and influence, as ignorance and superstition have been chased from the field. But what bitter sensations must arise in every philanthropic breast, to see how little progress has yet been made in the important work of enlightening and reforming mankind? Is it not almost enough to unnerve our efforts, when we consider the mighty labours which are yet to be achieved before this desirable end is accomplished? Is it not almost sufficient to sink the most resolute perseverance in despair, when that tenacious obstinacy is contemplated, with which long established absurdities are cherished, as most valuable treasures? Who can, without poignant emotion, behold interest and ambition incessantly, and but too successfully, labouring to preserve the empire of ignorance over the minds of the multitude? But surely the sublimer motives of humanity and benevolence must be strangers to the breast of him, who

who can refuse to lend his zealous aid, towards the extirpation of all "lying vanities," if he but considers their baleful influence. Would he lead mankind to the service of God, here let him commence his labours. Would he erect on earth the mansion of that "godliness, which has the promise of the life, that now is, and of that which is to come," here let him lay his foundation. The slave of bigoted prejudice, as well as the subject of impure passion, cannot possess that child-like simplicity, with which the apostle exhorts us, to receive "the sincere milk of the word, that we may" be nourished, and "grow thereby." He must be void of that kind, long-suffering charity, without which, all his professions are but "founding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." This universally benevolent principle is incompatible with that persecuting spirit, which can harass a brother for opinions sake, or destroy him for fancifully imputed crimes.

But such a spirit is the sure offspring of superstition, that desolating fiend, which, under the false title of wars of religion, has deluged the earth with blood, sacrificed by whose tyranny the smoke of the army of martyrs has ascended to heaven. This, this is the dæmon, which can rob us of our reason, and steel our hearts against the sympathising calls of humanity, can arm us with the mad folly of brutes, and the unfeeling malice of furies. Then let man, in every station and in every clime, raise his arm against this hideous enemy, let him exert all his powers to chase this dire destroyer from the face of the earth. Yes, let him banish this parent of "lying vanities, and trust in the "Lord."

Methinks I hear some calm, cool objector say,—What, eradicate all at once those superstitious notions, which serve to awe the ignorant, and frighten them into their duty, and will they not wildly rush into the paths of disobedience?—With what painful conviction of the imperfection

tion of human nature, must every one, acquainted with man, acknowledge this ungrateful truth? Through a long series of revolving ages, superstition nourished by ignorance, and too often cultivated by knavery, has wide extended its dominion over the minds of men. With the bulk of the human race, if we entirely deprive them of this restraint, we leave the will uncontrouled, and the understanding a void, ready to be seized and tyrannized over by the first invading passion,

Then should we strive to eradicate by gradual culture, and the introduction of more pure and exalted motives, what it would be unsafe instantly to expel. It is thus that we must lay the foundation of all true regard and confidence in the great supreme, a confidence springing from love and gratitude towards a gracious benefactor, not an homage generated by a fearful dread of an omnipotent Lord. For it is not as an arbitrary tyrant, that our God would be slavishly obeyed; but as a beneficent Father, that he would be willingly

willingly honoured. He is desirous that all his creatures should look up to him, as the being whose providential care and tender mercies pervade and preserve the universe, that they should place their dependence upon him, and not give to another any portion of that respect and honour, which is due to him alone.

The natural offspring of prevailing superstition is infidelity. Of the truth of this the present times afford us a lamentable example. Where ignorance and fear once ruled supreme, there has rash philosophy but too successfully planted presumption and atheism, 'Tis the diffusion of pure and solid knowledge, which alone can preserve us from the dominion of these opposite tyrants. How should this consideration increase our zeal and stimulate our endeavours! The immediate sphere of our action may be circumscribed, but our exertions will not on that account be entirely lost. In that circumscribed sphere let us labour to root out every superstitious

tious lying vanity, and plant pure religion and unsophisticated truth in its stead.

How charming, how enlivening to the soul, to gaze upon the dawning beams of opening light, to behold them irradiate that dismal gloom of intellectual darkness, which long overwhelmed the millions of mankind: How supremely pleasing, to view them wider and wider spreading their invigorating influence: How rapturously transporting, to contemplate the splendid prospect of pure and perfect day!

“ Power supreme !

“ O everlasting King ! to thee we kneel,

“ To thee we lift our voice ;”—

O spread thy benign, thy vivifying light over the dwellings of the sons of men; dispel the yet impending mists of ignorance and superstition: And, O preserve us from the dismal gulph of infidelity and atheism; Let thy truth run and prevail gloriously; let pure, celestial wisdom overspread the earth as the waters cover
the

the sea!—Then shall millions kneel before thee with grateful and enraptured hearts; then shall they rejoice to sing the praises of thee, their Benefactor, their Father, and their God: Then shall this vale of tears be filled with the mansions of joy and gladness, and become a blissful foretaste of those regions, where thy saints, crowned with unfading glory and felicity, surround thy throne with never ceasing hallelujahs !

F I N I S.

THE MOST
STRANGE AND ADMIRABLE DISCOVERIE
OF THE
THREE WITCHES OF WARBOYS,
Arraigned, convicted, and executed,
At the last ASSIZES at HUNTINGDON,
For the bewitching of the Five Daughters of
ROBERT THROCKMORTON, Esquire,
And divers other Persons,
With fundrie Divellish and grievous Torments:
AND ALSO FOR THE
Bewitching to Death of the Lady CRUMWELL,
The like hath not been heard of in this Age!
LONDON. 1593.

SUCH is the title-page of that curious narrative, an abridgement of which is here submitted to the reader's perusal. As far as could conveniently be done, the words of the original have been adopted, and are distinguished by a single inverted

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verted comma. The singularity of the subject, rendered it almost impossible to forbear interspersing a few observations, but it did not appear necessary to point these out by any particular mark of distinction ; the discerning reader will easily discover them, and readily accede to them if just.

‘ About the 10th of November 1589,
 ‘ Mistris *Jane*‘ one of the daughters of
 ‘ the said Master *Throckmorton*, being neere
 ‘ the age of ten years, fell upon the sodaine
 ‘ into a strange kind of sickness, the man-
 ‘ ner whereof was as followeth. Sometimes
 ‘ she would neese very lowde and thicke
 ‘ for the space of halfe an houre together,
 ‘ and presently as one in a great trance
 ‘ and swoune lay quietly as long : soone
 ‘ after she would begin to swell and heave
 ‘ up her belly, so as none was able to keep
 ‘ her down : sometime she would shake one
 ‘ leg, and no other part of her, as if the
 ‘ paulsie had been in it ; sometime the
 ‘ other : presently she would shake one of
 ‘ her armes, and then the other ; and soone
 after

‘ after her head, as if she had been inflicted with the *running paulsie*.’ In this manner she had continued to be affected for several days, but without any suspicion of witchcraft, when old *Alice Samuel* came to visit the sick child, and sat down by the side of her in the chimney-corner, having a black knit cap on her head. ‘ This the child soon observed, and pointing at her, exclaimed, ‘ Grandmother, looke where ‘ the old witch sitteth; did you ever see ‘ one more like a witch than she is? Take ‘ off her blacke thrumb’d cap, for I cannot ‘ abide to looke on her.’

The child still growing worse rather than better, her parents sent her urine to *Cambridge*, to Dr. *Barrow*, ‘ a man well ‘ known to be excellent skilful in phisicke,’ who, after repeatedly trying the effect of his prescriptions, without success, ventured to suggest, ‘ that he had some experience of the malice of some witches, and ‘ he verily thought that there was some ‘ kind of forcerie and witchcraft wrought ‘ towards this child.’ This suggestion,

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however,

however, did not make any deep impression upon the minds of her parents, 'until one just month after, (the very day 'and hour almost observed),' when two more of their daughters were seized with the same malady, and complained in the same manner of *Mother Samuel*. Soon afterwards the youngest daughter was seized, and last of all the oldest was reduced to the same situation, though still more severely handled than her younger sisters; they all however agreed, in placing all their afflictions to the account of old *Alice Samuel*.

It may not be superfluous just to mention, that the same charge was brought against this old woman by the servants of *Mr. Throckmorton*, who, to the number of six, were at different periods afflicted in the same manner as his daughters.

To the sceptic this may appear but weak evidence, but what objection can he make to the clear proof of guilt, which was furnished from the following experiment? In the month of February, succeeding

ceeding the commencement of this lamentable tragedy, these children were visited by their uncle *Gilbert Pickering*, Esq. who, on his first arrival at *Warboys*, found them all 'very well as children could be.' He then went, with others, to the house of mother *Samuel*, 'to persuade her to come 'to see and to visit the saide children;' but this reasonable request she resolutely refused,—undoubtedly from a consciousness of her guilt, and a fear lest some clear proof of it should be exhibited. But upon Mr. *Pickering's* threatening to compel her, if she refused to go of her own accord, she at last complied, and was accompanied by her daughter *Agnes Samuel*, and one *Cicely Burder*, her suspected confederates in this abominable witchcraft. No sooner had she 'entered the hall, where three of the 'childred were standing by the fire perfect well, but at one moment, they all 'fell down upon the ground strangely 'tormented, so that if they had been let 'lie still on the ground, they would have 'leaped and sprung like a *quicke pickerel*, 'newly taken out of the water.' Almost immediately

immediately one of them, *Jane Throckmorton* was taken up, carried into another room, and laid upon a bed, the covering of which she soon began to scratch, repeatedly crying out, ‘ Oh that I had her, ‘ Oh that I had her.’ Mr. *Pickering*, surprized at this, fetched mother *Samuel*, (‘ who came as willingly as a beare to the ‘ stake’), to the child’s bed-side, and desired her to put her hand to the child’s, but she refused, though encouraged by the example both of Mr. *Pickering*, and others, whose hands, however, ‘ the child would ‘ scarce touch, much less scratch.’

At length, ‘ without any malice to the ‘ woman, confidence or opinion in scratching, (only to taste, by this experiment, ‘ whereto the child’s words would tend) ‘ he took mother *Samuel*’s hand, and thrust ‘ it to the child’s hand, who no sooner felt ‘ the same, but presently she scratched her ‘ with such vehemence, that her nayles ‘ brake into spilles, with the force and ‘ earnest desire she had to revenge.’ In the midst of her rage, Mr. *Pickering* covered

vered the old woman's hand with his own, yet the child would not scratch his hand, but 'felt eagerly for that which she missed,' and mourned bitterly at the disappointment. All this time not only her eyes were closed, but her face was also turned from Mr. *Pickering*, and his companions, and hid in the bosom of the person who held her down upon the bed.—How then was it possible for her to distinguish the hands presented to her, except by the direction of the evil spirit, which possessed her? Unless indeed we have recourse to the *extravagant* opinion, that *she could be directed by the motions and whisperings of the company about her, or could be able to distinguish by the touch, the shrivelled hand of an old woman from that of any other person.*

The presence and agency of an evil spirit were evinced by repeated occurrences. For generally when ever prayers commenced before these children, the wicked spirit would shew its resentment, by tormenting them, but would 'instantly be quiet, as soon as prayer ended;'

'ed ;' even grace before or after meat
 it would seldom hear with patience, or
 suffer family prayer to pass over in peace,
 though the children were removed into
 another room. The same was the case,
 when ' any one read the Bible, or any
 ' other godly book, before them ;' and
 not unfrequently at the mention of ' any
 ' word that tended to God, or godliness,
 ' the spirit raged all one as if any read or
 ' prayed by them.' One particular instance
 the reader will excuse our inserting. When
 one of these children was in her fit, a per-
 son present ' chanced to ask her, or rather
 ' the spirit in her : Love you the word of
 ' God ? whereat she was sore troubled and
 ' vexed. But love you witchcraft ? it
 ' seemed content. Or love you the Bible ?
 ' again it shaked her. But love you Pa-
 ' pistrick ? it was quiet. Love you prayer ?
 ' it raged. Love you the Masse ? it was
 ' still. Love you the Gospel ? againe it
 ' heaved up her bellie : so that what good
 ' thing soever you named, it misliked ; but
 ' whatsoever concerning the *Pope's paltrie*,
 ' it seemed pleased and pacified.' At the
 same

same time this evil spirit, or spirits, would allow these children, with apparent pleasure, 'to play at cards, or any other foolish game,' with some *one* they might pick out of the company, and whom they would see and converse with, though unable to see or hear *any one else*. For such was the singular variety of their afflictions, that sometimes they would be totally insensible, sometimes they would be able to see and hear, but not to speak; sometimes to hear and speak, though not to see; and sometimes to see and converse with particular persons, though completely insensible of the presence or conversation of any other person. Nor were the modes of relieving them from their distressing situation less singular; if carried into the open air, to some particular place, or in some particular direction, they would recover; but if returned to their former place or situation, they would immediately relapse. When in their fits, the children themselves, (*or rather the spirits*) would frequently predict their own recovery, at a certain time, upon being conveyed to a

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certain

certain place, or upon the performance of a certain ceremony, *which predictions were uniformly verified by the event.*—The unbelieving sceptic may perhaps consider some of these circumstances, as stronger indications of *human* delusion or knavery, than of extraordinary *spiritual* agency. But should we corroborate the fact by half the curious instances the original furnishes us with, this narrative would be swelled to an extravagant size; and more *important* matter claims our attention.

After these children had, for some time, suffered in this extraordinary manner, in the month of March, 1590, they were visited by the Lady of Sir *Henry Cromwel*: ‘She had not long staid in the house, ere ‘they all fell into their fits,’ (*an occurrence which invariably took place whenever any strangers came to see them*) ‘and were so ‘grievously tormented, that it pitied that ‘good Ladies heart to see them: Whereupon she caused mother *Samuel* to be ‘sent for;’ and, taking her aside, she ‘charged her deeply with this witchcraft, ‘using

' using also some hard speeches to her,
 ' but she stiffly denied them all, saying,
 ' That Master *Throckmorton*, and his wife,
 ' did her much wrong, so to blame her
 ' without cause.' Lady *Cromwel*, unable
 ' to prevail with her by good speeches,
 ' sodainly pulled off her kercher, and ta-
 ' king a paire of sheeres, clipped off a
 ' locke of her haire, and gave it privily
 ' to Mistris *Throckmorton*, together with
 ' her hair-lace, willing her to burn them.'
 Perceiving herself so ill used, she said to
 the Lady: '*Madam, why do you use me*
 '*thus? I never did you any harm as yet.*'
 ' The same night, Ladie *Cromwel* was
 ' strangely tormented in her sleep by a
 ' cat, (as she imagined) which mother
 ' *Samuel* had sent unto her, which cat of-
 ' fered to plucke off all the skin and flesh
 ' from her armes and bodie.'—Was it so
 extraordinary that she should have such a
 dream, considering what work she had
 been engaged in during the day?—' Not
 ' long after the Ladie fell very strangely
 ' sicke, and so continued unto her dying
 ' day, which was some year and quarter

‘ after her being at Warboyfe. The
 ‘ manner of her fits was much like to the
 ‘ childrens, and that saying of mother
 ‘ *Samuel*, (*Madam, I never hurt you as yet*)
 ‘ would never out of her mind.’—The rest
 of the evidence, upon which the three
Samuels were condemned for bewitching
 this Lady to death, will appear in the
 course of this history.

Such multifarious wickedness was too
 much for one spirit alone to perform; old
 mother *Samuel*, therefore, and her affoci-
 ates, had no less than nine at their com-
 mand. The names of the first six were,
 ‘ *Pluck, Blue, Catch, White, Calico,* and
 ‘ *Hardname*, (for his name standeth upon
 ‘ eight letters, and every letter standeth
 ‘ for a word),’ and that of the other three,
Smack, they being coufins: for be it known
 that relationship exists even amongst the
 inhabitants of the nether regions. The
 favourite form, under which they appear-
 ed before those, to whom they came to
 pay their unwelcome visits, was that of
dun chickens.

We

We shall omit many *wonders* which happened previous to that season, but we cannot forbear mentioning, that, 'towards 'Hollantide,' (probably Hallowmas, or All-Saints Day) 1592, 'the spirits grew 'very familiar with the children,' (*a most natural consequence of long acquaintance*) 'and would frequently talk with them 'halfe an hour together, and sometimes 'longer.' The general subjects of their conversation were mother *Samuel*, whom they honoured with the appellation of *Dame*, and charged with being their employer; and the children's fits, when they should come out of them, when they should fall into them again, and of what nature they should be.

But they did not always confine themselves to these topics, as the following specimens will evince. The oldest of these afflicted damsels, being one evening in her fit, thus addressed the visitant spirit: 'From whence come you, Master *Smack*, 'and what newes doe you bring? The 'spirite answered, that hee came from
'fighting.

' fighting. From fighting, sayth she,
 ' with whom, I pray you? The spirite
 ' answered, with *Pluck*. Where did you
 ' fight, I pray you, sayd she? The spirite
 ' answered, in his old Dame's back-house,
 ' and they fought with great cowlstaves,
 ' this last night. And who got the maste-
 ' rie, I pray you, said she? He answered,
 ' that he broke *Pluck's* head. Saith she, I
 ' would that he had broke your necke also.
 ' Saith the spirite, is that all *the thanks I*
 ' *shall have for my labour?* Why, saith
 ' she, do you look for thanks at my hands?
 ' I would you were all hanged up one a-
 ' gainst another, and your Dame and all,
 ' for you are all nought. So he departed,
 ' and bad her farewell,' promising to come
 again on Wednesday. Immediately af-
 afterwards came *Pluck* himself, hanging
 down his head, and acknowledged his
 unfortunate discomfiture.

The next day she was visited by Mr.
Catch, who came limping, and complain-
 ed that *Smack* had broken his leg; but he
 threatened to ' be even with him before
 ' he

' he had done. Then sayd she, Put forth
 ' your other legge, let me see if I can
 ' breake that also; for shee had a stick in
 ' her hand: The spirit tolde her that she
 ' could not hit him: Can I not hit you,
 ' sayd she? let me trie. Then the spirite
 ' put out his legge, for she lifted up her
 ' stick easily, and sodaynely gave a great
 ' stroake upon the ground. You have not
 ' hurt me, sayd the spirit. Have I not
 ' hurt you, sayd she? but I would if I
 ' could, for then would I make some of
 ' you come shorte home. So she seemed
 ' divers times to strike at the spirit, but
 ' he leaped over the sticke, as she sayd, as
 ' if it had been a *Jack an apes*. So after
 ' many such toyes used between them,
 ' the spirit departed, and she came forth
 ' of her fit, continuing all that night, and
 ' the next day very sicke, and *full of payne*
 ' *in her legs.*' The following evening af-
 ter supper, Master *Blue* paid her a visit,
 with his arm in a sling, which he said had
 been broken for him by the doughty hero
Smack; yet he threatened that they would
 one day fall upon him all together, and
 take

take ample revenge for every injury. The day after she 'fell into a senceless fit,' (not recognising any person present;) 'Anon, 'fetching a great sigh, she said, Who sent 'for you, Master *Smack*? He made answer, that he was come according to his 'promise which he made unto her on Sundaie at night. Belike, said she, you 'will keep promise, but I had rather you 'would keep awaie, and come when I send 'for you: but what news have you 'brought? I told you that I had been a 'fighting the last Sundaie night, but I 'have had manie battles since. Yea, so it 'seemeth, saith she, for here was both '*Pluck*, *Catch*, and *Blew*, and they all 'came maimed unto me: But I marvel 'that you could beat them, they are very 'great, and you are but a little one. Said 'he, I am good enough for two of the 'best of them together. But, sayd she, I 'can tell you news: They will all at one 'time fall upon you, and beat you. He 'said, he cared not for that, he would beat 'two of them, and his cousin *Smacks* 'would help him to beat the other two.'

For

{For *Hardname* was also of the party). ' In
 ' the end, the spirit sayde, You shall have
 ' no more such fits as you have had. No,
 ' sayd she, that is well; but you can doe
 ' nothing but lye. Why, sayd hee, will
 ' you not beleeve me? No, sayd she, shall
 ' I beleeve the Divil, who is the Father
 ' of all lyes? I pray God it be true, but
 ' whether it be true, or not, I care not a
 ' rush for you. No, sayd he, will you
 ' not *thank me*? Thank you, sayd she,
 ' hang you and all your fellowes, for I
 ' will not beleeve you no farther than I
 ' see you, neither do I care for any of you
 ' all.'—Such absurd dialogues, of which
 the narrative affords a numerous collec-
 tion, such silly ravings of a disordered
 imagination require no comment.

It ought not to be forgot, that this
Smack was peculiarly attached to this
 young lady, and strove to gain her affec-
 tions by fair promises and kind usage:
 and it was on her account that he had
 those gallant battles with the less ena-
 moured spirits, whom he beat so unmer-
 cifully,

cifully, because they persisted in tormenting her. The censorious critic may perhaps say, with a sneer, *And is it such an extraordinary miracle, that love should occupy the thoughts of a young lady of eighteen?*

Soon after this familiarity commenced between the spirits and the children, the former began more manifestly to accuse mother *Samuel*, and to say, ere long they 'would bring her to confession or confusion. The old woman resided now entirely at Mr. *Throckmorton's* house; for, contrary to the usual custom in such cases, ('*but there is no certainty in Sathan*'), her presence was a sure relief to the children. This, however, continued only for a time, for mother *Samuel* getting at length an opportunity 'to feed her spirits, and 'make a new league and composition 'with them,' her presence became of no avail. Yet Mr. *Throckmorton* retained her at his house, 'because the children, 'being in their fits, could neither heare, 'see, nor speake to any body else, and 'some of them could take nothing, but
' that

‘ that which shee either gave them or
‘ touched with her hands.’

And now the children were continually teasing the old woman to confess herself guilty, affirming, that the spirits told them, ‘ they would soon enforce her to ‘ confess, in despite of herself,’ if she would not do it voluntarily: They encouraged her by promises of forgiveness, to which their father and friends assented; they entreated her with tears, saying, that by this means she would certainly relieve them, and restore them to perfect health; they also set before her the severe punishment which she would inevitably meet with both in this world and the next, if she obstinately persisted in her wickedness. Her general answer was, ‘ That she ‘ would doe for them all the good she ‘ could, but for confession of this matter, ‘ she would not, for it was a thing she ‘ never knew of, nor consented unto.’

A few days before Christmas, one of these children was attacked with a more

violent fit than any of them had before experienced, yet she was threatened by the spirit with one still more terrible. Mother *Samuel*, who was present, was so affected with the sight, that 'she many times prayed she might never see the like agayne in any of them.' At the same time the children entreated her to confesse, 'that they might be well, and keep a merry Christmas;' and their father also seconded their entreaties, but in vain. He then requested Mother *Samuel* to charge the spirit, that his daughter might escape the fit with which she was threatened. 'She presently said, I charge thee, spirit, *in the name of God*, that Mistris *Jane* never have this fit. The child sitting by, sayd, truly the thing saith, 'I thank God, that I shall never have this fit that he hath foretold me of.' Again, at the father's request, the old woman charged the spirit, *in the same manner*, to leave all the children immediately, and never return to them again; scarce had she uttered the words, before three of them, 'who were then in their fits, and
' had

‘ had so continued for the space of three
 ‘ weeks, wiped their eyes, and instantly
 ‘ stood upon their legges, being as well
 ‘ as ever they were in their lives.’

Mother *Samuel*, as soon as she perceived
 this, fell on her knees before Mr. *Throck-*
morton, intreating him to forgive her, and
 confessing, that she was the cause of all
 this trouble to his children. The next
 day, she confirmed this confession public-
 ly in the church, and in the evening was
 permitted by Mr. *Throckmorton* to go home
 to her husband and daughter.

Towards the evening of the following
 day, Mr. *Throckmorton* received information,
 ‘ that his new convert had revolted againe,
 ‘ and had denied all that she had spoken
 ‘ to him ;’ he therefore went immediat-
 ly to her, and threatened to take her
 before the justices, if she retracted her
 former confession, but his threats proved
 ineffectual. The next morning he sent
 for her again, and she still persisting in
 the denial of her guilt, he gave the con-
 stables

stables charge of her and her daughter, to take them before the Bishop of Lincoln. Alarmed at this, the old woman once more offered to confess to Mr. *Throckmorton* in private, though very averse to doing so in public. On the same day, the 26th of December 1592, she was taken to *Buckden*, where, upon examination before the Bishop of Lincoln, she confessed, 'That a dun chicken did frequently suck on her chin, before it came to Mr. *Throckmorton's* house, and that the ill and the trouble which had come to his children, had come by means of the said dun chicken, which she knew was then both gone from them and from her.'

On the 29th, she was again examined before the Bishop, and two Justices of the Peace, when she said, 'That she never did hurt to any, saving to the children in question; that she knew the said dun chicken was gone from the children, because the said dun chicken, with the rest, were come into her, and were then in the bottom of her bellie, and made her
so

' so full, that she could scant lace her cote,
 ' and that on the way as she came, they
 ' weighed so heavy, that the horse shee
 ' rid on did fall downe, and was not able
 ' to carrie her,' that she had received
 these spirits from an upright man, whose
 name she did not know. She then went, by
 the direction of her examiners, into ano-
 ther room, and 'there with a loud voice, said
 ' these words as followeth, *O thou divel, I*
 ' *charge thee in the name of the Father, the*
 ' *Son, and the Holy Ghost, that thou tel me*
 ' *the name of the upright man which gave me*
 ' *the divels:* which thing she did three
 ' times, and then returned, saying, that
 ' the spirits had tolde her his name was
 ' *Langland.*' In the same manner she in-
 quired, where he dwelt; and the answer
 returned was, 'That he had no dwelling.'
 To the question, where *Langland* then
 was, it was answered, 'that he went the
 ' last voyage beyond the seas.' After she
 had confessed these, and many other things
 of a similar nature, Mother *Samuel* was
 committed, along with her daughter, to
 the goal of Huntingdon.

Upon

Upon the perusal of these confessions, many will be ready to embrace the opinion of those, whom the author of the original narrative censures, because, 'thinking themselves wise,' they did not hesitate to say, 'that this Mother *Samuel* in question, was an olde simple woman, and that one might make her by fayre words confess what they would.' It will not escape their observation,—that she never confessed herself guilty, till after she had been assailed by reiterated solicitations, soothed by promises, and alarmed by threats. The spirits had also *predicted* her confession, and she must have observed how regularly *their predictions were accomplished*. She saw the children relieved from their distressing situation at her command. All these circumstances must have had an astonishing effect upon a feeble and superstitious mind, so that, we need not wonder, if at length they caused her not only to suspect herself, but absolutely to conceive herself in league with the devil.

At

At the quarter sessions (January 9, 1593) following the commitment of *Agnes Samuel*, and her mother, Mr. *Throckmorton* requested the 'High Sheriff and the Justices to baile this maide, and to have her home to his house, to see whether any such evidences of guiltiness would appear against her, as had before appeared in the children against her mother.' After some demur his request was granted, and *Agnes Samuel* accompanied him home. A few days after she was brought thither, the children fell 'all of them a fresh into their fits, and then the spirits did begin as plainly to accuse the daughter, as ever they did the mother, and to tell the children, that the old woman hath set over her spirits to her daughter, and that she hath bewitched them all over agayne.' I shall forbear enumerating the various severe scratchings which she underwent from each of the children at different times, every particular circumstance of which was invariably foretold by the spirits; especially as such stronger proofs of her guilt were exhibit-

ed. For when she had been almost a month at Mr. *Throckmorton's*, one of the children was told by the spirit, when in her fit, that they should any of them 'be presently well,' whenever *Agnes Samuel* should say, '*I charge thee, divel, as I love thee, and am a witch, and guiltie of this matter, that thou suffer this childe to be well at present.*' This was repeatedly tried before a great variety of witnesses, and was always attended with instant success, though these words had not the least effect when spoken by any other person.

The spirits also told the children afterwards, of other charges, by which her guilt was made still more clear, such as, '*I charge thee, divel, as I am a witch, and a worser witch than my mother, and consenting to the death of LADIE CRUMWEL :*' and, '*As I have bewitched Mrs. Pickering of Ellington, (an aunt of these children) since my mother confessed ;*' and again, '*As I would have bewitched Mistris Joan Throckmorton to death.*'

The

The effect of these three charges, or charms, was repeatedly proved by different people, and even by the *Judge himself*, on the day before the trial of the culprits. For whenever *Agnes Samuel* called any one of these children out of her fit by one of these charges, (*particularly if any strangers were present*) she would almost immediately fall into another, and after being relieved from that, into a third, till the three charges had been successively proved effectual.

Last of all, the spirits began to accuse *John Samuel* the father, as they had before done the mother and daughter. They appealed to a charge, or charm, like the preceding ones, as a clear proof of the truth of their accusation; but from the perversity of circumstances, and the obstinacy of the old man, this was only once proved previous to the trial of these three delinquents.

On the 5th of April 1593, these three wicked offenders, *John Samuel*, *Alice Samuel*,

and *Agnes* their daughter, were arraigned before Mr. Justice *Fenner*, 'for bewitching of the *Ladie Cromwal* to death; and 'for bewitching of Mistris *Joane Throckmorton*, Mistris *Jane Throckmorton*, and 'others;' when 'Master *Dorrington*, Doctor 'of Divinitie, and parson of the town of 'Warboyse, *Thomas Nut*, Master of Arte, 'and vicar of Ellington,' the father of these afflicted children, and others of their relations, appeared as evidence against them. By these the before related 'proofs, presumptions, circumstances, and 'reasons,' with many others of the same species, 'were at large delivered, untill 'both the Judge, Justices, and Jury said 'openly, that the cause was most apparant; their consciences were well satisfied, that the sayd witches were guilty, and had deserved death.' As to *John Samuel*, occular proof of his guilt was exhibited in court. For amongst the rest 'Mistris *Jane Throckmorton* was 'brought into court,' and there, in her fit, unable to speak, or see any one, though 'her eyes were open,' she was set before

before the Judge, who was told that there was a charm, which ‘ if old *Samuel* would ‘ speake, the sayd *Jane* should be well.’ In consequence of which information, he was requested by the Judge to repeat the charm, but this he positively refused to do, till threatened, that if he persisted in his obstinate refusal, ‘ the court would ‘ hold him guiltie of the crimes whereof ‘ he was accused.’ Intimidated by this threat, he at length complied, ‘ and said, ‘ in the hearing of all that were present, ‘ *As I am a witch, and did consent to the ‘ death of Ladie CROMWELL, so I charge ‘ thee divell, to suffer Mistris JANE to ‘ come out of her fit at this present.*’ Which words being no sooner spoken by ‘ the old ‘ witch, but the said Mistris *Jane*, as her ‘ accustomed order was, wiped her eyes, ‘ and came out of her fit.’ The Judge immediately observed, ‘ *You see all shee is ‘ now well, but not with the musicke of Da- ‘ vid’s harpe.*’—We must not forget, that the spirit had *previously told this Mistris Jane*, when she was first seized, on the 16th of March, ‘ that she should never ‘ come

' come out of her fit, until old father *Samuel* had pronounced these wordes.'

When the Judge, previous to passing of sentence, asked Mother *Samuel* the usual question, What have you to say for yourself, why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon you? She answered, that *she was with child*. Such a plea from a woman of near eighty years of age, excited the laughter of all present, and the old woman ' laughed herself more ' than any other.'—Could a stronger proof of her dotage or insanity be possibly exhibited?

At the place of execution, old *Alice Samuel* again confessed her guilt, and that her husband was her associate in these *wicked* proceedings, though he resolutely denied it to the last. Her daughter she strenuously exculpated, who as warmly asserted her own innocence; ' but being ' willed to say the Lord's prayer and the ' creed, when, as she stood upon the ladder

‘ der readie to be executed, she sayd the
 ‘ Lord’s prayer, until she came to say, *but*
 ‘ *deliver us from evil*, the which she could
 ‘ by no means pronounce ; and in the
 ‘ creed she missed very much, and could
 ‘ not say, *that she believed in the Catholic*
 ‘ *church.*’—A circumstance amply sufficient
 to convince every one that she could not
 possibly be *innocent*.

To this narrative, so fertile in ‘ proofs,
 ‘ presumptions, circumstances, and rea-
 ‘ sons,’ we shall add no further observa-
 tion, though it furnishes such an ample
 field for comment, fully persuaded, that
 its *consistency, clearness, and probability* are
 sufficient to remove every doubt and hesi-
 tation from the mind of the reader.

F I N I S.

not ready to be excited, the Lord the
world's prayer, until the time to lay
about as from early the which the world
by no means pronounced; and in the
created the world very much, and could
not say, that he believed in the Christian
world. — A circumstance amply sufficient
to convince every one that the world not
possibly be in error.

To this narrative, I refer in proofs,
promulgation, circumstances, and re-
sults, we shall add no further obser-
vation, though it furnishes them an ample
field for comment, and is intended, that
its contents, already, and probably are
sufficient to remove every doubt and hesi-
tation from the mind of the reader.